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Welcoming Ramadan

Feeling Euphoric During the Month of Ramadan – Haleh Banani

Just mention the word 'Ramadan' and Muslims around the world light up. There's a feeling of excitement and anticipation. People just can't wait until it arrives. For some, there's actually a countdown to the first day. Try explaining this eagerness to an average non-Muslim and they feel totally bewildered. They stare in disbelief when a Muslim describes the incredible peace and strength they derive from not eating or drinking for an entire day. They cringe at the thought of waking up before the crack of dawn to eat a meal and standing in prayer for an hour every night for a month. It's just beyond their comprehension. The euphoria of Ramadan can only be understood or appreciated by those who have lived and experienced it firsthand. Regardless of how eloquently the wonders and wisdom of Ramadan are explained, enough can never be said to truly capture the phenomenal experience.

What exactly is it about this month of Ramadan that provokes such genuine enthusiasm and eagerness in Muslims around the world? Primarily, it is the obedience to Allāh's commandment to fast. Adhering to Allāh's commands gives an individual a strong sense of unity with the rest of the universe. Every creature, every living thing, every planet and galaxy is in complete submission to Allāh except for human beings and jinn which have been given free will.

**The seven heavens and the earth, and all beings therein, declare His glory: there is not a thing but celebrates His praise; and yet you do not understand how they declare His glory! (17:44)** Therefore, when we submit to the Will of Allāh and are obedient, we become in sync with everything that exists. This synchronism is the peak of harmony and peace which envelops our hearts and creates a sublime tranquility that is unparalleled with anything else.

In addition to the satisfaction we receive from obeying Allāh, there is a real urge to redeem ourselves. To correct the past, to make amends and to purify ourselves from any sins we have committed either knowingly or unknowingly. The ardent devotedness to repent from all of our shortcomings and to embrace all the acts of worship which will cleanse our hearts is truly awe-inspiring.

When we critically reflect on the past year without the usual justifications and excuses about our laziness in worship, the injustices we have committed to our loved ones, the ungratefulness of all our extraordinary blessings and the careless ways we have spent our time, money and effort, then and only then can we wash away the sins with the tears of regret begging Allāh for His Mercy and His Forgiveness with fervent supplication.
Say: “O My slaves who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins), Despair not of the Mercy of Allāh: verily, Allāh forgives all sins. Truly He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (39:53)

As we attempt to mend the mistakes of the past, we gain new insight and motivation to improve ourselves and to strive to earn as many good deeds as possible with the remainder of our lives. We earnestly pray with more concentration, read pages and pages of the Qur’āneffortlessly and we mindfully avoid even the smallest sins in fear of invalidating our fast.

This revived zeal is fueled by the knowledge that Allāh Most Merciful multiplies our good deeds exponentially during the blessed month of Ramadan. The night of Al-Qadr (Decree) is better than a thousand months. (98:3) It is in similitude to having our wages increased significantly for a period of time. With an increase in wages we would work long hours yearning to work overtime in order to reap the financial rewards. The marathon of earning the most spiritual rewards becomes an unstoppable passion which begins to fortify our personal growth.

But as for him who feared standing before his Lord, and restrained himself from impure evil desires and lusts. Verily, Paradise will be his abode. (79:40,41) Respect is a result of congruency between our knowledge of the truth and our actions. When we act in accordance to our beliefs, we gain psychological, emotional and spiritual harmony.

With an improved relationship with Allāh through worship and a new awareness of our inner strength, we are naturally drawn to our family and friends to share the joy and enlightenment we have experienced. The frequent dinner invitations help nurture the love and benevolence amongst us. This pure, unadulterated love for the sake of Allāh will help us attain a higher status on the Day of Judgment.

“Allāh the Exalted will declare on the Day of Resurrection: 'Where are those who loved each other for the sake of My Grace? This Day, I shall shade them under My Shade, when there is only My Shade.'” (Muslim)

Attending the congregational prayers at the mosque regularly increases the sense of unity and Muslim pride. As we see our friends and acquaintances fill every inch of the mosque, shedding tears of remorse and hope, our īmān(faith) gets recharged and we view our life in a whole new paradigm. We celebrate this new perspective and our successful journey in self-purification and introspection by gathering for the Īd prayer, which is the culmination of the rituals of Ramadan.

It is the synergy of worship, commitment, improvement and unity that leads to such a phenomenal experience during Ramadan. It is no wonder why so many Muslims around the world beam with excitement when approaching this blessed month. If up until now the only focus has been to refrain from eating and drinking, let us embrace it this year wholeheartedly to acquire its riches, for this may be our very last Ramadan.
Ramadan Reflections: The Grand Opening – Ismail Kamdar

This year, I am enjoying the benefits of praying Tarawih behind Mufti Ismail Menk and listening to his powerful Tafseer afterwards. On the opening night, Mufti Menk brought up an issue which always amazes me, the unique method in which the Qur'an begins. This made me reflect on the opening pages of the Qur'an.

Surah Al-Fatiha and the first three pages of Surah Baqarah are an amazing and unique method of starting a book. Perhaps, it is because we recite Surah Fatiha everyday, multiple times, that many of us do not take these verses seriously. Yet, the reason this Surah is emphasized so much is because it is the most important chapter of the Qur'an. It is Faatihatul Kitaab (The opening chapter of the book), Sab'a Mathaani (the seven oft-repeated verses 15:87) and Ummul Kitaab (the essence of the book 13:39). It is the Surah that when recited, Allāh replies to each verse. It is the most important du‘ā’ that we can make.

The first half of Surah Fatiha is a declaration of Tawheed in all of its forms, Rububiyyah (Lordship) “All praise to Allāh, the Rabb (Lord) of the universe,” (1:1), Asma Wa Sifaat (names and attributes) “Most Gracious, Most Merciful, Master of the Day of Judgement,” (1:2-3) and Ibaadah (worship), “You alone we worship and you alone we ask for help.” (1:4)

The second half of Surah Fatiha is the most important du‘ā’ a person could ever make, “Guide us to the straight path!” (1:5) The Surah then explains what is the straight path and what is not. The straight path is that which was shown to us and followed by those whom Allāh has favoured, which Allāh explains in another verse, “whoever obeys Allāh and His messenger, then they will be with those whom Allāh has favoured from the prophets, truthful, matyrs and righteous.” (4:69) This verse refutes the claim by some people that you can find your own way towards Paradise without following the people of the past. True salvation lies in following the Salaf As-Saliheen (The righteous predecessors) and their understanding and practice of the Qur'an.

Allāh then shows us two types of misguidance. The first form of misguidance is to earn Allāh's wrath by knowingly rejecting the truth and the other form is to go astray by choosing to remain ignorant. So we need to realize that choosing to remain ignorant can not excuse us for our sins and deviations, and if we knowingly reject the truth, we will be cursed by Allāh. The only option left is to seek the truth and ask Allāh to guide us to the straight path.
Amazingly, the very next Surah begins by answering this du‘ā’ for guidance. “This is the book in which there is no doubt! It is a guidance for those who are God-conscious.” (2:2) Three things are interesting about this verse. Firstly, show me one other book which begins by declaring its own perfection. No human author would dare readers from the beginning by making the claim that there is nothing doubtful in his book, this immediately makes skeptics look for mistakes. The Qur'an, being the perfect word of Allāh, begins with this challenge, a unique and powerful starting point.

Allāh then explains to us that this Qur'an is the answer to our du‘ā’ for guidance but the condition is that we approach this Qur'an with Taqwa (God-consciousness). This is why not everyone benefits from reciting the Qur'an. Allāh warns us on the next page to not be from those who only recite ritually or with an evil intention as “it is the same whether you warn them or not, they will never believe.” (2:6) This verse is aimed primarily to those who choose to reject Islam, but like all verses we need to apply it to ourselves and make sure we do not possess any of the qualities that Allāh dislikes.

The first three pages of Surah Baqarah describe three types of people in terms of belief and relationship with Allāh. Allāh goes into detail describing those who have Taqwa and attain success, then briefly mentions those who choose to disbelieve, and finally He mentions in even more detail, the hypocrites. It is for us to study these verses and put into the practice the qualities of the successful while being careful to guard ourselves from possessing the qualities of the disbelievers or hypocrites.

After all of this, Allāh mentions the first commandment in the Qur'an, the most important commandment and the benefit of obeying it. Allāh says, “O mankind, worship your Lord who created you and those before you so that you may attain Taqwa.” (2:21) The first and most important commandment is to uphold Tawheed by worshipping Allāh alone as it is through this that we can attain Taqwa and through Taqwa that we can attain guidance from the Qur'an.

I ask Allāh to grant all of us īmān, Taqwa and a deeper understanding of the Qur'an. Āmīn.
Causes of Forgiveness in Ramadan – Yusra O.

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah (radi Allahu anhu) that the Prophet (sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam), "Whoever fasts Ramadan out of faith and seeking reward, his previous sins will be forgiven. And whoever stays up and prays on Laylat al-Qadr out of faith and in the hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven.” He also related that the Prophet (sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam) said, “Whoever prays at night in Ramadaan out of faith and the hope of reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven.” (Agreed upon).

In the hadeeth of Abu Hurayrah (radi Allahu anhu), there is evidence that each of these three actions is a cause for forgiveness of previous sins; fasting the month of Ramadan, praying in it's nights, and praying in the night of Qadr. Praying in the night of Qadr is a cause of forgiveness alone for whoever is able to catch it, regardless of whether it is in the beginning of the last ten days, middle or in the end and regardless of whether the person feels that it is the night of al-Qadr or not. The forgiveness promised in this night is specific for it, and is not conditioned on completion of the month. As for the forgiveness promised for those who fast Ramadan and pray in its nights, it is conditioned on the completion of the entire month. So once the month is completed, only then is the believer counted among those who fasted the month and prayed it's nights, thus being rewarded with forgiveness of previous sins. When those who fast complete their fasting in the month of Ramadan and praying in it's nights, then they have completed what was upon them of deeds. What remains is what is for them of reward; being forgiven.

When they go out for prayer on the day of 'Īd ul-fitr, their rewards are distributed among them and they return to their homes having fully attained their reward (for the month). As for the one whose actions were deficient, then so will his reward be decreased accordingly, so he shall blame none but himself. Salman said, “The prayer is a scale, so whoever truthfully honored it, he will be truly rewarded. And whoever deceived in it, then you know what has been said about the Mutaffifeen.” Fasting and the rest of the acts of worship are on a similar pattern: whoever guards them in truth, then he is from the favored slaves of Allāh, and whoever is deceitful, then woe to the Mutaffifeen. Is he not shameful, one who honestly fills the scale of his desires, yet is treacherous in the scale of his fasting and prayer?

"Tomorrow shall the souls gains what they earned" And the sowers shall reap their harvest If good then for themselves it is And if bad, then evil is what they have done

The righteous predecessors would strive to complete their actions with perfection and proficiency. Afterwards they would worry about acceptance of the deeds and fear rejection.
Such are those whom Allāh described: And they who give what they give while their hearts are fearful because they will be returning to their Lord (Al-Mu‘minun 23:60).

It is narrated that Ali (radi Allahu anhu) said, “Worry more over the acceptance of the deed than the deed itself, do you not hear the words of Allāh ‘azza wa ‘jal, “Indeed, Allāh only accepts from the righteous [who fear Him].” (Al-Ma‘idah 5:27).

From among the causes of forgiveness in this month is providing food for the fasting ones to break their fast with. Remembering Allāh and istighfar are also causes of being forgiven. Istighfar is supplicating for forgiveness, and the supplication of the fasting person is accepted during his fast and at the moment of breaking his fast.

And from the reasons of forgiveness is the istighfar of the Angels for the fasting people until they break their fast. With many sources of forgiveness in this month, then the one whom it passes without being forgiveness is truly the most deprived. When then will he be forgiven, he who is not forgiven in this Month? When then will he be accepted, he who was rejected in the night of Al-Qadr? When then will he be set aright, he who is not set aright in Ramadan? When will he be cured, he who is afflicted with the illnesses of ignorance and negligence? All trees that do not bear their fruit during their time of ripening are broken and thrown in the fire. Whoever was inattentive to his plants when they bore their fruit has not gathered for the Day of harvest except remorse and loss!
Bringing in Ramadan with a Chocolate Cake – Saqib Shafi

I read a tweet from Wisam Sharieff the other day, on how he tried to spread awareness of Ramadan to non-Muslims by way of handing out treats.

![Tweet from Wisam Sharieff](image)

This inspired me to do something like this on my own, so I consulted my wife:

“I want to take something to work tomorrow. Do you think I should make brownies?” I asked her, before leaving for tarawih night prayers on the first evening of Ramadan.

“We could. But, how about a cake?”

After a little thought and realizing that she probably knows better than me, I approved it, and the plan went ahead.

The next morning, my wife baked and decorated the cake, while I went to work. I picked it up during my usual trip home for lunch, brought it in to work, and sent out the following email:

Hello everyone,
There's chocolate cake with strawberries on the back counter behind Jayne's desk. Please feel free to have some.

My wife baked it as a celebration for today being the first day of Ramadan this year. Enjoy!
Saqib

While my associates were excited about getting free cake, it opened up a dialogue on Ramadan and Islam, as I had hoped.

Associate #1 asked what Ramadan was. I explained that it is our holy month, in which the Qur'an was revealed, during which we fast daily to come closer to God. She asked what the Koh-ran was, and if we do it for Mohamed. I explained that the Qur'an is what we believe to be the final scripture after the Bible. And, as is the case for everything else, we fast for God. To us, Muḥammad is a prophet, just like Jesus, Adam, Moses, and so on. She was blown away! She had no idea that we believed in the other prophets, or in a continuation of scripture; she thought our religion was one dedicated solely to Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him).

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She then shared with me her annoyance at the way that Christmas and Easter have been commercialized and *paganized*, and commended us for keeping our tradition strong.

**Associate #2** asked, “So are you fasting? When’s ‘Id?” Being from India, she probably knew what was going on, from being around Muslims back home.

**Associate #3** came and said, “Happy Ramadan! Is that okay to say?” I laughed and replied that of course, it was.

**Associate #4** also asked what Ramadan was and, after hearing that it involved fasting, mentioned that she used to fast three times a week for one year, while visiting sick people in the hospital. Amazed, I asked her if she felt spiritually empowered by it, to which she responded that it made her feel that, if she can give up things that she likes, then she can do anything. I explained that this is exactly what we believe we get out of fasting: if we can abstain from what we can have (*halal*), then we certainly can stay away from sins and what we're not allowed to have (*haram*).

**Associate #5** approached my cubicle with a very serious face. I asked her why she was so solemn; she said that she was going to ask a personal question, and didn't want to offend me. When I let her know that she didn’t have to be so formal, she asked what Ramadan was. I explained to her what the month was about. She panicked at the idea of not eating all day, for twelve hours. I told her fifteen. She was shocked.

**Associate #6** kicked in, saying that when he played football in college, he had a teammate named Nasir who fasted while continuing to train and lift weights. I mentioned that NFL's [Husain Abdullah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Husain_Abdullah) of the Minnesota Vikings, and [Hakeem “The Dream” Olajuwon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hakeem_Olajuwon) do the same. He said he remembered Abdullah doing so last year, and that he was really impressed that someone could do that for their faith. Props to that brother, Nasir!

**Associate #7** chimed in, saying that she read an article in the Tribune the other day, about a woman who homeschools and was trying to focus on patience and self-control while fasting in Ramadan. The article is actually about Olivia Kompier, wife of MuslimMatters' author Siraaj! I told the associate that she's a convert who accepted Islam while in high school (may Allāh reward the people who helped her find it), opening up the idea that non-Muslims in America find our religion and grab onto it.
So, with a little cake mix, frosting, and strawberries, I got a mix of dialogue that not only began with an explanation of Islamic theology, but ended with an example of someone converting to our faith.

As curious and open as some people are to hearing about our beliefs, a lot of them don’t know much about them, or have misconceptions that can be easily corrected. It doesn’t hurt to have the information we give them go down with a little chocolaty goodness!

I hope this story inspires you to do something like this with your own co-workers, classmates, and neighbors. If not now, then for ‘Īd. But try to do something! Thanks to Wisam Sharieff for inspiring me, and thanks to my wife for baking the cake. There’s a leftover chunk that didn’t get eaten. *Iftar* dessert after breaking my fast, you ask? Maybe. That, or a 4:30 am *suhur*... :)

Because Muslims Matter.
Creating Ramadan Traditions – Hina Khan-Mukhtar

When I reflect on my childhood memories of celebrating the blessed month of Ramadan while growing up in Southern California in the 1980’s, different images flash through my mind...

Ammi playing the Holy Qur’an on the house intercom system at sahoor time. Scrambled eggs and shaami kabaabs frying before the sun came up. Abbu sitting in the upstairs hallway outside his bedroom, reciting from the Book of Allāh before he left for office. Coming home tired from school only to be set to work cutting up apples and oranges and bananas for the evening fruit salad, then helping my mother fry egg rolls and grape leaves. The night before 'Īd prayers the girls excitedly laying out their glass bangles and freshly ironed clothes and trying to sleep without spoiling the drying henna on their hands. The long distance calls from relatives overseas who shouted to be heard, wishing us well and sending us prayers for health and happiness. We crowded around the phone, grabbing it from one another, grinning and yelling back in order to make sure they too heard how much we loved and missed them.

There were annual traditions that I fondly remember as well, including the potluck iftar parties and masjid-sponsored 'Īd festivals. Who can forget the one auntie who always hosted the Jumat-al-Wida (farewell Friday of Ramadan) iftar in her spacious home? The children could always be found congregating around the cold-coffee urns set up in her backyard, eagerly vying with one another to be the first to taste the whipped cream-filled-dates set out on silver trays. Another auntie-and-uncle couple opened their home every 'Īd-ul-Fitr for a lavish breakfast buffet which was highly anticipated the moment 'Īd prayers were completed at the local fairgrounds a few minutes away.

Now that I am living in Northern California in a community made up primarily of converts to Islam, I am rediscovering the power of having traditions which children can look forward to and depend upon year after year. I have been fortunate in that I have been able to benefit from the creativity in my new friends who are eager to create Ramadan traditions that will attract and hold their children (who they fear may be lured by the competing sparkle and brilliance of Christmas festivities they witness in their own non-Muslim family members' homes).

What touched me most when I sat with my girlfriends in the early days of motherhood as we brainstormed ideas for creating memorable Ramadan traditions was the sincerity and desire to ensure a balance between the material and the spiritual. These thoughtful women were extremely wary of falling prey to Western commercialism where Ramadan might inadvertently become yet another consumer month about gifts and cash and parties in the kids' eyes; the culture of “gimme gimme gimme” was one everyone avidly wanted to avoid.

With that being said, I wanted to share some of the traditions we have been practicing in our own home with our three boys for the past ten years now. I asked my sons to list some of their favorite memories and traditions surrounding Ramadan, and these are the ones they rattled off without a moment's hesitation.

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1.) Moon-sighting

Back in the year 2000, four families gathered at a scenic vista point in the Berkeley hills to try and search for the new moon signifying the beginning of Ramadan. When we arrived, we were pleasantly surprised to find that two other Muslim families had also come up with the same idea and were already comfortably settled on the platform with binoculars and thermoses of hot chocolate by their sides. We introduced ourselves and scanned the skies together for the elusive crescent to appear over the majestic San Francisco skyline. As the years went by and word spread over time about this great location, more and more families have joined us. Our last moon-sighting trip had over 70 people (including a news reporter and photographer) gathered together with baked goodies to share and cups of hot chai to pass around. The children run amongst the adults with flashlights and sparklers in hand before being called over to join the jama'ah for group prayer under the stars. The anticipation builds from the moment we sit in our family van, blasting Yusuf Islam's upbeat “Ramadan Moon” on the entire trip up through the twisting and turning roads in the mountains. Whether we sight the moon that night or not, there is excitement in the air and it is contagious; there's just something about community that gets your “battery” charged to face a month of fasting together.

2.) Ramadan Calendar

Khadija O'Connell is an extremely talented lady whom many affectionately refer to as “the Muslim Martha Stewart”. Everything she touches seems to blossom simply by her presence. She has brought elegance and sophistication to the most mundane of things, and the pride she puts in her work is obvious. Whether she's teaching a sewing class to a group of eight-year-old boys or organizing her highly acclaimed “Creativity and the Spiritual Path Conferences”, her attention to detail and aesthetics is of the highest caliber. I happen to know that her personal motto in life is based on the words of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi,”Let the beauty you love be what you do,” and I often find myself reflecting on the hadith, “Verily, Allāh is Beautiful and He loves beauty,” whenever I witness anything she has had a hand in. If readers want to see for themselves, they need only visit her website www.barakahlife.com to appreciate what I’m talking about.

Nearly ten years ago, Khadija came up with an idea for her family which other people immediately wanted to replicate in their own homes. Using rich textiles with vibrant colors, she sewed a Ramadan Calendar, very similar to a Christmas advent calendar. She created 30 pockets with an attractive star button stitched onto each one. Felt was cut out into the shape of 30 crescent moons and stored in an organza drawstring pouch. A section of velvet was left at the top of the calendar so that a family could have their children's names or a “Ramadan Mubarak” message embroidered there for posterity. We hang this gorgeous calendar in our dining nook and at every iftar, after eating their dates, the kids reach into the organza pouch and pull out a felt moon to slip onto the star button of the day. Then they dig into the pocket and pull out their treat for the evening. The treat can be anything from chocolates to stickers to collectible toys to race cars. We also tuck in a paper with one of Allāh (subhana wa ta’ala)'s Names on it so that by the end of the month the kids can have learned at least a third
of Allāh's Most Beautiful Names. Some families opt to put in a simple hadith every evening. The point is to use your own imagination and have fun while giving the kids a means to see how quickly the month is passing by. Many of us initially tried to sew these calendars on our own, but fortunately for everyone else who might be interested in taking on this tradition for their own young ones, Khadija now markets these special creations to great demand on her website.

3.) Decorating the House

It doesn't matter that Ramadan will be arriving near the end of summer this year; you can be sure that our house will still be strung up with fairy lights (what some refer to as “Christmas lights”), inshā’Allāh. I bought some darling garden lanterns during the end-of-season sales last year, so now we have those gold and maroon paper lanterns to string up around the living room as well. The boys are more than willing to help their father with the task of illuminating the Mukhtar home; it has become a family project where the mother directs and the men obey...and everyone enjoys the experience immensely.

Another friend decorates her house with “the Ramadan chain of kindness”. Everyone in her family goes out of their way to acknowledge a simple (or significant) deed of kindness they witness any family member performing by recording it on a strip of construction paper. They make a point of not including the name of the do-gooder in order to discourage pride and encourage humility for the sake of Allāh (subhāna ‘wa ta’āla). They then curl these strips into rings and connect them to one another. When we were invited to her home for iftar one evening, we noticed this paper chain of links winding its way around the living room; each strip had a comment written on it like “helped change a diaper”, “took out the garbage”, “washed the salad”, “brought mommy water”. They also placed a homemade sign in their public street-facing window which read “So-and-So Family wishes you all a Happy Ramadan!”

4.) Baking Cookies for the Neighbors

It started out as a neighborhood outreach plan, but over the years has become something much bigger than we ever imagined, alhamdulillāh.

Soon after the tragic events of 9/11, we baked some yummy cookies at home, packaged them in plastic boxes with a “FastBreak” candy bar (get the pun?), and delivered them to our neighbors' mailboxes along with a note explaining Ramadan and our ummah's wish for world peace and joy in 2001. It has now become a community event with friends gathering at each other's houses and mosques to package star and crescent shaped cookies (sprinkled with green sugar) in gold boxes with da'wah messages typed on sparkly vellum paper and shimmering organza ribbons to tie everything together. We have managed to work with the same popular local bakery for the past five years now, and the kids get a great kick out of running around the neighborhood delivering the treats. My own sons once reflected how it was the completely opposite experience of trick-or-treating — we're here to give you a treat, not demand one for ourselves, and no one is out to “scare” or “trick” anyone. It's a celebration of lightness, not darkness!
5.) Ramadan Food Drive

Our county’s Food Bank has come to really appreciate the month of Ramadan. They tell us their shelves are loaded during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, but they have a difficult time keeping up with the needs of the poor during the rest of the ten months of the year. Since Ramadan follows the Islamic lunar calendar, it moves throughout the year and — thanks to the generosity of local Muslims — they can now anticipate full shelves once again in the month of August, inshā’Allāh. Our Islamic Center has found, however, that if you ask people to donate groceries or bring in necessary items on their own, good intentions often are not followed through upon with solid actions; therefore, we have taken it upon ourselves to facilitate our members’ sincerity by making it easy for them to feed the hungry.

Our children have a new Ramadan tradition now which requires them to gather at the Islamic Center to bag basic pantry staples — cereal, pasta, juice, canned fruits and vegetables — in paper sacks. It takes quite a bit of time and it is hard work, but the children enjoy it nevertheless. These bags of groceries are then sold at Friday prayers for $5 each. People purchase the bags in the names of their children or spouses or families and then these sacks are placed in the Food Bank barrels which are provided by the Food Bank with their official logo. At the end of the month, a large truck arrives from the Food Bank and the men and children from our community help load the month’s donations. There is often a news crew covering the event as well which makes for some positive media in these times when Muslims so desperately need it.

An easier way to give charity during this sacred month, however, is to have your kids decorate a glass mason jar and label it “Sadaqa Jar”. They put in their own money throughout the month and on ’Īd morning they donate the contents to the local masjid. I have my kids say their own special, private duas while they give charity so that they can continue to be aware of their complete reliance on Allāh’s Generosity...especially when they are in a position of giving to those less fortunate. May they always have the means and the desire to help others, inshā’Allāh.

6.) Waking Up On ’Īd Morning

At some point during the night before ’Īd prayers, my husband and I sneak in the helium tank we rented from the local party supply store a day earlier. While the kids are sleeping, we inflate as many gold and silver balloons as we can and then attach long dangling glittery ribbons to them. We cram as many of these balloons as possible in the children’s bedroom so that, when they wake up for Fajr prayer, they are greeted with a vision of sparkle and magic. We also leave a trail of balloons leading out of their room down the stairs to the pile of gifts stacked near the dining room table. I know that after so many years the kids are on to our routine, but they humor their parents anyway by whooping it up and grabbing the balloons the moment they awaken. Believe me when I tell you that this is a tradition that gives as much to the parents as it does to the children.
Another friend has me baby-sit for one Ramadan afternoon so that she can go shopping in secret for her children's 'Íd baskets. She exerts quite a bit of effort in elaborately decorating large wicker baskets with ribbon and paper. Then she thoughtfully chooses items that she knows her two children will treasure — a set of new oil paints for her artistic son, an embroidery kit for her creative daughter, books by their favorite authors, new hijabs and kufis and socks, high quality prayer beads, delicious chocolates — everything is carefully arranged on a mound of tissue paper. The children wake up on 'Íd morning and find the baskets of goodies — one pink, one blue — waiting for them at the foot of their beds.

The kids' reward for fasting the month of Ramadan is obviously with Allāh (subhana wa ta'ala), but we parents want to show our pride and pleasure in them as well, and these are such easy ways to do it. The looks of pure joy and delight on the children's faces makes the parents' late night effort well-worth it!

* * *

A respected scholar once told us that he knows of people who have held onto their Islam simply because they remember experiencing wonderful, memorable 'Íds with their families. There really is something magnetic in the pull that Ramadan has on us. We love to telephone each other late at night and excitedly announce, “Ramadan Kareem! Yes, it's confirmed! So-and-So sighted the moon!” We enjoy discussing our preparations for the upcoming month of fasting with one another. We desire to be part of the community that is persevering through days of hunger and nights of worship together. We feel connected to Muslims everywhere — whether they are students in school, co-workers at the office, or taxi drivers who are taking us to our destinations — through these shared daily experiences of knowing what it means to deprive the body and feed the soul.

Children especially thrive off of the routine and rhythm we offer them. I became aware of this one year when I thought I had misplaced our treasured Ramadan calendar. I reassured my boys that I would look for it later but that we would just have to “make do” for the first iftar without the calendar hanging in our dining nook as in years past; I would still be sure to provide the iftar treat that would otherwise have been discovered in the calendar. They put on cheerful faces and agreeable attitudes, reassuring me that all was well, but as he was going to his room, my eldest betrayed the feelings of his brothers by sighing, “I don't know why, but it just doesn't feel like Ramadan for some reason this year.” Their sense of disappointment nagged at me, so I put off my procrastinating and, once they were in bed, went searching and uncovered the calendar at the bottom of my linen cabinet. When I casually called up to them, “By the way, I did find our Ramadan calendar after all!”, I was surprised by the cheers of relief that came from their bedrooms. I don't think any of us realized how much this tradition meant to our family until we were faced with the threat of losing it.

Now that the boys are getting older, our emphasis with them is more on the spiritual benefits of Ramadan and less on the “Santa Claus is coming to Ramadan” attitude. We encourage one another to focus on our love for our Lord and our desire to be close to Him. This month is still — as always — about being good neighbors and good Muslims, but we hope our behavior
isn't anything “new” in the eyes of our Creator and that we can continue to benefit from any little that we accomplish this month throughout the rest of the year until the next blessed Ramadan arrives...if Allāh allows us to live that long, inshā’Allāh.

May Allāh (subhāna wa ta’āla) reward all parents who work so diligently at teaching their children about their responsibilities to Allāh and His Prophet (ṣallallahu ʿalaihi wasallam). May our kids all grow up with a deep and abiding love for their deen and its duties in their hearts. And may Allāh bestow His Mercy and Generosity on us all this blessed Ramadan and make it the best ever so far. Āmīn. Readers are sincerely requested to please keep the writer of this article in their prayers as well. JazakAllahu khayr.
5 Historic Events During Ramadan That Rocked The World – Muhammad Wajid Akhter

We all know that Ramadan is the month of fasting, abstinence and reflection. However, what we may not know is that Ramadan also just happens to be a month of awesome history defining events that shaped the world we live in today. Here are my top 5 events that occurred in the month of Ramadan:

5. Battle of Guadalete

Ramadan, the 92nd year of Hijrah (711 C.E.) a slave of the Umayyad governor of Africa and his Berber troops faced off against the Visigoth king of Spain. Tariq bin Ziyad was born a slave and would die a beggar, but somewhere in between he managed to become one of the greatest generals the world has ever seen.

Having landed shortly before on a large rock at the bottom of Spain (that to this day is names after him), Tariq literally burned the boats that brought him and his comrades from the Maghreb. The extreme motivational tool worked and despite being outnumbered by the enemy by a ratio of at least 3 to 1, the Muslims managed to defeat the Visigoth King Roderic at the battle of Guadalete and race on to take over the whole of Spain and most of the France.
Thus began 800 years of Muslim rule in Andalusia that was the apogee of Umayyad civilization, laid the basis of the European enlightenment and proved that Muslims, Christians and Jews could live in harmony – well, at least until the Inquisition came along.

4. The Horns of Hattin

Salahuddin Ayyubi was one of the most awesome heroes in the history of Islam. We know he defeated the crusaders and reclaimed Jerusalem for Islam and the Muslims after almost a century of Frankish desecration. We even know that he managed to do this all whilst essentially being an extremely nice guy with chivalry and honesty being qualities that even his enemies acknowledged in him.

But did you know that he also had impeccable timing? Salahuddin had been slowly circling the Crusader kingdom for years. He was building his strength, neutralising weak points within his own ranks and essentially playing a massive game of chicken with the Crusader King. Well, in Ramadan of 1187 C.E., the game came to a head with both sides going for broke at the Horns of Hattin. What followed was less a battle and more a masterclass by Salahuddin in how to own your enemy tactically, physically and mentally. When the dust settled, the Muslims had triumphed, the leaders of the Crusader kingdom were prisoners and the road to Jerusalem was clear. Oh, and he retook that on the anniversary of israa and miraaj (the Prophet [peace be upon him] ascension to heaven via Jerusalem)... like I said, impeccable timing.

3. The last stand at Ain Jalut

Few Muslims had heard of Mongolia let alone seen anyone from there and yet here were this band of barbarians laying waste to everything that lay in their path. To give you an idea of how scared Muslims had become, it was said that if a Mongolian warrior asked a Muslim to wait kneeling for him whilst he went and found a sword to kill him with, the Muslim guy would wait patiently rather than risk a fate that was literally worse than death!

The whole of the Islamic world had collapsed in the face of this new and terrible enemy. Well, not the whole Islamic world. One last outpost remained. In Egypt, the Mamluk sultan Qutuz decided that he wasn't just going to wait for his turn to die. He gathered his forces and made one last stand. At the springs of Goliath (Ain Jalut) the last consequential army in the Muslim world faced off against the undefeated Mongols. It was like a boxing match between some scrawny challenger and the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world – only with millions more lives at stake. The outcome of the battle see-sawed between the Muslims and the Mongols until finally, Qutuz himself led the breakthrough by charging deep into enemy
ranks. That Ramadan, Ain Jalut marked the first time that the Mongols had lost a pitched battle – and Islam (not to mention the rest of the world) was saved.

2. Conquest of Mecca

The conquest of Mecca was more than just a footnote in Islamic history. It was the happy ending of one of the most amazing stories ever told. A story in which a band of men and women were tortured and harassed in their own home town because of their faith, how they had to flee as refugees and within the decade returned as conquerors.

The conquest of Mecca was a turning point in world history. Islam had returned home to where it had begun and the Kaaba was once more dedicated to the worship of Allāh alone. As Meccagoes, so does the rest of Arabia and within the time it takes for news to travel, almost all of tribes in the Peninsula sent delegations to Madīnah with their allegiance.

Today more than 1.6 billion Muslims turn their face five times a day for prayer, go on Hajj at least once in a lifetime and bury all our dead facing towards this city conquered on one fateful day in Ramadan.

1. Battle of Badr

The mother of all defining moments – the battle of Badr is without a doubt the most important existential battle between good and evil in the history of mankind. On one side, the last Prophet ﷺ and just over 300 of his followers. On the other, the idolaters of Quraish with their superior numbers, weapons and wealth.

What followed was an epic battle that still resonates with Muslims across the world. Actually – the word “epic” doesn't even begin to define the enormity of this battle. How important was this battle in the grand scheme of things? Before the battle started the Prophet ﷺ raised his hand to the heavens and said words to the effect, “If this small band perish today, then there will be no one left to worship you on the face of this Earth.” They didn't perish and to this day, all who profess that there is no God but Allāh and Muḥammad is His messenger are eternally grateful.
Lesson from the History?
To see Ramadan as only a month of inward spiritual reflection and purification is to miss out on the real example of sacrifice, struggle that has been a feature of the month of Ramadan throughout our history. This Ramadan, get involved in a project and make a difference to the Muslims in your community and the world around.
Supplications

Supplication: Seeking Refuge from 4 Things – Yusra O.

In a hadith recorded in Saheeh Muslim, Zaid bin Alqam narrated that the Prophet used to supplicate:

اللّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعْوَدُ بِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ لَا يَنْفَعُ وَمِنْ قَلْبٍ لَا يُخَشَّعُ وَمِنْ نَفْسٍ لَا تَشْبَعُ وَمِنْ دُعْوَةٍ لَا يُسْتَجِبُ لَهَا

Allahumma inni a'udhu bika min 'ilmin la yanfa'u wa min qalbin la yakhsha'u wa min nafsin la tashba'u wa min da'watin la yustajabu laha

“O Allāh, I seek refuge in You from knowledge which does not benefit, from a heart that does not entertain the fear (of Allāh), from a soul that is not satisfied and the supplication that is not answered.”

Selected Word Analysis

yanfa'u: Nafa'a means to be beneficial and useful. With regards to knowledge, ilman naf'ian - beneficial knowledge – is knowledge that leads to action. We covered a whole supplication asking for beneficial knowledge.

yakhsha'u: Khushu' is a fear that is manifested not only in your heart but it is shown on your face and limbs. Khushu' literally means to bend down and to become still. Khushu' is used for the submissiveness of the heart which is reflected on the limbs.

tashba'u: The root of this word means to be satisfied, to eat to one's fill and to gratify. This word can apply to eating or fulfilling desires. From this root is ishbaa' which means satisfaction and satiation.

da'watin: Da'wah literally means a call, request or invocation. When someone is involved inda'wah, it literally means they are calling others to Allāh azza wa jal. From this root is the worddu'a', both words have the same meaning when referring to a supplication.
Points of Benefit

The Prophetﷺ seeks refuge from four disastrous things in this supplication. Each one gives us a different lesson:

• “Knowledge that does not benefit”: This can mean knowledge that is not acted upon, or knowledge that has no use – such as worldly matters that do not give any benefit. The first type can lead to punishment, Rasul Allāh ﷺ said, “On the night that I was ascended up to the heavens, I came upon a people whose lips were being cut off by pliers made from Fire. Every time their lips were severed, they would be brought back and formed again. So I said: ‘O Jibreel, who are these people?’ He said: 'They are speakers from your nation, who say words but do not do deeds, and who read the Book of Allāh yet do not act (on it).'” [Al Bayhaqi, Hasan]

• “A heart that is not fearful”: In the Qur’an, Allāh (Subhanawata’la) describes the true believers as having khushu’ in their prayer – a humility that is seen on their limbs. If the heart has khushu’, the body will have khushu’. So khushu’ is not just a state of the heart, it is a state of the heart which is visible on a person’s actions, in their posture, and in their movements. In the hereafter, Allāh says that the disbelievers: “Their eyes will be downcast.” (79:9) These eyes that did not humble themselves to Allāh in the dunya, will have fear in the aakhirah. This fear will be apparent on their faces; faces that are full of shame, humiliation and abasement.

• “A soul that is not satisfied”: The nature of humans is to always want more, which is why we train ourselves to be pleased with the minimum. When a person is not satisfied, it may bring about greed, jealousy, ungratefulness, and a lack of contentment. The believers are satisfied with whatever they are given in this life, and in the hereafter, Allāh (Subhanawata’la)says: “And therein is whatever the souls desire and [what] delights the eyes.” (43:71) By refraining from indulgence in this worldly life, Allāh blesses the believers with everything they desire in the hereafter.

• When these three things exist in someone; a heart that is not fearful, a soul that is not satisfied and knowledge that is not beneficial, it leads to the four thing we seek refuge from: a supplication that is not answered. Why? For a duaa to be answered, the person has to be humble and showing their need to Allāh. A person with a heart that is not fearful has a hard heart, and one that is not satisfied is greedy.

• “A supplication that is not answered”: Not having supplications answered by Allāh is a scary matter. Allāh ﷺ tells us to call upon Him, to ask Him and that He will give us. For Allāh(Subhanawata’la) to not answer a supplication, it means that the person in involved in something wrong. In a famous hadith, we learn that the man who eats, drinks and is clothed from what is haram will not have his duaa answered.
Also, we must remember that a duaa is answered in three ways: Allāh will grant the person what they are asking for, or the person is protected from something harmful or Allāh will respond to the person in the hereafter. So we seek refuge from Allāh from it being not answered, but we still have to have faith that we may not completely understand the wisdom if we do not see the answer we expect, since Allāh may answer it in one of these three ways.
Spirituality

Ramadan Reminder: The Fruit of Patience is Always Sweet – Yasir Qadhi (Transcribed by Sameera Thakore)

The verse that mentions the story of Ayyūb is very interesting. Allāh mentions a number of prophets in Sūrah Śād. Of the prophets, Allāh says, “And remember, O Muḥammad…” Allāh tells the Prophet Muḥammad to think about Ayyūb as a role model. We need to understand that all the prophets are role models for other prophets. They are also role models for us. Every prophet has something the other prophets will benefit from. Our Prophet Muḥammad is told in the Qur’ān: “Be patient like the strong prophets of old were patient.” Allāh tells our Prophet, “Look at the stories of those before you. Through the trials of the previous prophets, your own chest will become affirmed, and you will get hope and optimism.” One of the stories that Allāh reminds our Prophet Muḥammad about is the story of Ayyūb. Allāh calls him His slave and His servant.

“When he made du’ā’ to his Lord, he said, 'O my Lord, Shayṭān has afflicted me with a pain and with torture.'” What is the story of Ayyūb? We don't have it mentioned in the Qur’ān and Sunnah in detail, but just references are given. We gather from other sources [the Isra’iliyyāt], which we are allowed to narrate. Isra’iliyyāt are the stories that are found in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Our Prophet Muḥammad told us about our position towards those stories. He said, “You may narrate them, but don't believe in them fully and don't deny them unless you have knowledge from our own book.” The gaps that are filled in by the stories of the Old Testament are allowed to be narrated. “Go ahead and tell the people that we are getting it from the Old Testament. There is no problem in that. But don't believe in it like you believe in the Qur’ān. Allāh knows – maybe they changed some details, subtracted, or added. Don't deny it – it may be true – unless something is found in the Qur’ān that contradicts.”

Ayyūb’s Test

From the Old Testament, we learn the story of Ayyūb in much more detail. Ayyūb is called Job in the Old Testament. The story of Ayyūb, as summarized in the Old Testament, is that he was blessed with an immense fortune and an immense wealth. Allāh blessed him with
ten sons, which is a huge number. Allāh blessed him with a large house and many agriculture and many plantations. He was a thankful servant of Allāh. Allāh wanted to test and try to see whether he would be thankful if all of this is taken away. “What would you do, O Ayyūb, if you don't have your wealth, your plantations?” Overnight, a storm came and it was one of the thunderstorms that have fire in it as well. They are very rare but happen. This test from Allāh came and took everything that Ayyūb had. He was outside of his house, and the house itself collapsed, and all of his children died. Only his wife was saved. Everybody else was taken back to Allāh. The entire property was destroyed. In addition to that, he was then afflicted with a disease. What was this disease? Some books say leprosy and other books say other things. Basically, his skin began to fester and wound. It became so difficult to look at him. Ayyūb had been a handsome man, and he was blessed with beauty and a good body. He was then afflicted with a type of pain and a type of suffering that people couldn't bear to look at him.

He had to abandon the city and live in a shanty-house and a small structure. Nobody would come close to him except his wife who was very dedicated, and she continued to support her husband and continue to take care of him throughout this time. His worship did not change at all. He continued being just as thankful for what he had, and he continued praying and fasting and doing whatever he could despite the fact he didn't have anything of what he used to have. His attitude towards his Lord did not change at all. He passed the test. Allāh says, “This is our true servant Ayyūb who worships Us regardless of the situation he is in, whether he is rich or poor, whether he is healthy or sick, the Lord will not change. Allāh's blessings will be given if you put your faith in Him.” He prayed to Allāh and blamed it all on Shayṭān. “O my Lord, Shayṭān has done all of this,” and this is of the positive attitude of the believer. We said many, many times: the believer never ascribes evil to Allāh even though at the end of the day nothing happens except if Allāh decrees. We don't ascribe it to Allāh. We ascribe it to ourselves. “It is because of my sins.” Or we ascribe it to the Shayṭān, but we don't ascribe evil to Allāh. Our Prophet ﷺ said, “All good comes from you, O Allāh. Evil I will not ascribe to You.” Ibrāhīm ﷺ made the duʿāʾ, “When I fall sick, He cures me.” Even though in the grand scale, the sickness is from Allāh and the cure is from Allāh, but how did Ibrāhīm phrase it? “When I fall sick. (It is my fault). He is the One who cures me.” We ascribe good to Allāh. We don't ascribe evil to Allāh. Ayyūb says, “Shayṭān caused all of this for me, and he has caused me pain. O my Lord, you know my situation.” Allāh responded and he was tested for a few years (three years, five years). He was tested for a time. But everyone should realize that when you are
tested, then that test is a temporary test and there is always a light at the end of the tunnel if you truly believe in Allāh.

After those few years, Allāh told him, “Kick the ground. Where you kick the ground, you will find water coming out from there. Wash yourself with this water. It is cold and pure water.” When he washed himself, he came out as handsome as he ever was, so much so that when his wife came with his daily food, she saw this beautiful stranger and said, “Where is my husband? He used to be around here.” She didn’t even recognize him because he had gone back to even a better state. Allāh says, “We gave him back his whole family, all the wealth that he had, and We doubled it.” Why? To show that this is what happens when you have patience.

What is Patience?

I want to talk about patience because this is the month of patience. Our Prophet said, “The month of Ramadan is the month of patience.” Our Prophet said, “If you can conquer fasting, fasting is half of all patience.” If you can perfect your fasting, then you have perfected 50% of patience. The rest of patience will be through other things. Patience (ṣabr) is a part and parcel of our life. Allāh in Sūrat’l-Muddaththir, the first surah to come down after iqra’, Allāh tells the Prophet, “Be patient for the sake of your Lord.” Being patient for Allāh is part of imān.

Ṣabrār means “to restrain, to tie up.” You say that an animal is maṣbūr if the animal is tied up. You say that the prisoner is ṣabra if his hands are tied up. Ṣabrār actually means to tie up, to be withheld, to restrain. Of course, you understand the logical connection between the original meaning and patience because what is patience? Patience means you control yourself. You put your hands down and an invisible knot around your hands and an invisible string around your tongue. This is what you are holding and you are restraining. The real meaning of ṣabr is to withhold. The reason why ṣabr is such a difficult action is because it is an inaction, it is no action. You are not supposed to do something. Your blood is boiling, and ṣabr tells you to trap it, clamp it down, control it. You want to scream, shriek, yell, and hit. Ṣabr means calm down and control it. This is the reality of what ṣabr is.

Allāh praises ṣabr in over 50 verses of the Qur’ān. Allāh says, “Allāh loves those who are patient.” Allāh says, “The believing men and women are those who are patient men and patient women.” Allāh says, “Allāh is with the sabīrīn.” Allāh says, “Those people will be given the highest apartments in Jannah because they were patient.” Al-ghurfah are the
highest levels of Jannah. Allāh says, “The angels will enter in upon you in Jannah and will tell you, 'Peace is on you today because you were patient. Because you had ṣabr, this is where you are right now.'” Allāh says, “Allāh saved them because of their ṣabr.” Allāh's Punishment is lifted because of your patience, and Allāh's Reward is a sign and the highest levels of Jannah are a sign. In fact, this is one of the best rewards of patience. We said many, many times that every deed is given between 10 to 700 times reward. There are some exceptions. Fasting is one of them. There is no limit because fasting is the embodiment of patience, and Allāh says about patience, “Those who are patient will get their reward back without it being counted.” When Allāh does not count, can you imagine how much you are going to get?

There are so many blessings as well. The hadith qudsi in Tirmidhi: the Prophet said Allāh said, “When somebody is tested with his son or daughter dying...” The most painful death is not the death of a parent but the death of a child. You expect the death of a parent, but you don't expect the death of a child. The death of a child is the greatest calamity that can befall any parent. The hadith qudsi said, “Whichever parent is tested by taking away his child and he remains patient at that, then that child shall intercede for him to go to Jannah.” Also in the hadith in Tirmidhi, the Prophet said that Allāh said, “If I take away the two pearls from the believer (his eyes), and he becomes blind and remains patient at that, then I have no reward lesser for him than Jannah itself.” These are all showing the importance of ṣabr that Allāh is speaking. The rewards here for patience are nothing less than Jannah itself. Allāh tells the believers, “If you only have patience – you are scared about the enemies of Islam and are worried about them – and have taqwa in Allāh, I will send 5,000 angels to take care of them.” The bottom line: if you have ṣabr, nobody can destroy you. Allāh is going to be on your side. When you have ṣabr, you will get Allāh's Rewards, Allāh's Blessings, and Allāh's Help.

As the saying goes, the fruit of patience is always sweet. If you try to be hasty, you are not going to get the fruit. If you are patient, you will get the fruit. My dear brothers and sisters, this is the month of fasting. It is the month of ṣabr. If we can perfect our fasting, we have perfected 50% of ṣabr. Allāh wants us to fast, one of the reasons being to teach us ṣabr. Why is fasting a part of ṣabr? Because we restrain ourselves from food and drink and that which is the most necessary thing for us.

***Three Types of Ṣabr***

Ṣabr is of three types.
1. **Ṣabr in the face of a calamity.** Death of a loved one, car accident, loss of a job, muṣībah happens. How do we do ṣabr at that point in time? We act Islamically. We don’t say what we shouldn’t say. We don’t move our hands and wail and cry. We act responsibly and sensibly. This is the first category of ṣabr.

2. **Restrain ourselves from committing sins.** If we see some alcohol and temptations come to drink it, some of us may have a problem with this, but they have ṣabr and control it. This ṣabr is generally more difficult than the first category because in the first category, you can't help it if you are in an accident and have to be patient. If somebody dies, what are you going to do? You are forced into it. In the second category, you have the will to do a sin, but ṣabr comes in and you restrain yourself. The highest category of ṣabr is:

3. **Restrain yourself from permissible things and put yourself into worship of Allāh constantly.** Allāh (س) says, “Be extra patient as you worship Him.” Praying five times a day is a sign of patience. Fasting is a sign of patience. Why? Because you are withholding and restraining yourself in order to do these good deeds.

**How to Attain Patience**

The final point: How does one attain patience? Two points:

1. **Study the blessings of patience.** Simply reading the Qur’ān and Sunnah and imām al-Nawawi has a very good chapter in Riyāḍ’l-Ṣāliḥīn on patience. Simply read this and be aware of the blessings of patience. This will bring about an immense ease when a calamity happens how to be patient.

2. **Ask Allāh to give you patience.** Our Prophet (ص) said, “Whoever turns to Allāh to get ṣabr, Allāh will give him that ṣabr.” Ask Allāh (س) for that patience and ask Allāh (س) to be granted that peacefulness and serenity to be able to conquer your actions.

   Remember that the Prophet (ص) said, “The strong person is not the one who can beat somebody else up. The strong person is the one who can control himself when he is angry because that is the ultimate patience.” **The ultimate patience is not to control somebody else but to control yourself. This is the month of ṣabr.**

May Allāh (س) grant us the perfection of patience. May Allāh (س) accept our fasting. May Allāh (س) grant us the tawfīq to stand on laylat’l-qadr. May Allāh (س) cause the Qur’ān to be

Because Muslims Matter.
an intercessor for all of us. May Allāh ﷻ cause us all to be amongst those who are patient. Āmīn.
Al-‘Afuww: Who Forgives in the Last 10 Nights – Omar Usman

Aisha asked the Prophet (saw) “What should I say on Laylat-al-qadr?”

He replied,

Say, “O Allāh, You are Al-‘Afuww and You love to ‘afw, so fa’fu me” (Tirmidhi).

What do all these italicized words mean?

The common translation of the supplication above is: O Allāh indeed you are a Pardoner, and you love pardon, so pardon me.

That's it?

The supplication for the last 10 nights, THE supplication we are supposed to focus on, is just to be 'pardoned' by “The Pardoner”? Isn't there more to it?

Seems a bit strange, let's look at it in more detail.

The linguistic meaning of 'afuww is to leave, neglect (pardon), to wipe away, and to increase. 'Aafiyah is Allāh's defense of His servant from things like disease and tribulation.

'Afu is the one who possesses great 'afw.

The Name of Allāh, Al-'Afuww, occurs in the Qur'ān only five times (4:43, 4:99, 4:149, 22:20, 58:2). Four of these times, it is linked with Al-Ghafoor, and once with Al-Qadeer (4:149). This Name implies that He ignores the sins of the servant. He knows the sins (you must know them before you can make 'afw of them) but He does not call the servant to account for it. The servant is deserving of punishment, and Allāh has full ability to punish His servants, but Allāh does 'afw for them. It is more than just pardoning or covering it up, it is wiping it away completely.
When the Name is paired with Al-Ghafoor, we see an extra level of forgiveness. Al-Ghafoor is the One who forgives no matter how large the sin.

When we look back at the original supplication, we see a more profound meaning. Allāh is Al-Qadeer, with full power to do with us as He wants,

*And if Allāh were to seize mankind for their wrong-doing, He would not leave on it (the earth) a single moving (living) creature, but He postpones them for an appointed term and when their term comes, neither can they delay nor can they advance it an hour (or a moment). (16:61)*

In spite of that warning, He wipes our sins away for us, no matter how major they are. Not only does He wipe them away, but He loves to wipe them away. SubḥānAllāh.

This is why we should make this supplication fervently, seeking for it to be answered in the night, in the most special of nights, seeking the forgiveness and mercy of Allāh, humbling ourselves knowing the sins we have committed, and asking for Him to pardon us for our transgressions.
How to Keep the Spirit of Ramadan Going – AbdulNasir Jangda

Alhamdulillāh – this is a very bittersweet moment we are all experiencing at the end of the month of Ramaḍān. Maybe we all have some regret and remorse for the opportunities we missed out on during Ramaḍān. But at the same time, it is also an opportunity to be grateful and thank Allāh for the blessing and ability that he did give us. Inshā’Allāh we go forward from here trying to be better people, to be the best that we can be, and hoping in the Mercy of Allāh SWT, that we will live up to our intention of being better people.

The Qur’ān very specifically points out that taqwā is the objective of the month of Ramaḍān- in simple words, the objective of Ramaḍān is to become a better person. What that exactly means, this is subjective, it differs from person to person – for someone it can mean 'I didn't pray and now, inshā'Allāh I will pray five times a day'; for another is could be that 'I had a very strange relationship with my wife, I learnt patience, gratitude, respect during Ramaḍān and I hope from now on my family relationships will be better'.

For another, it could be 'my home life is fine, so are my prayers, but I don't like to put money in the donation box – I learnt to do this in the month of Ramaḍān'. Whatever my challenge was, the month of Ramaḍān gave me the tools – fasting, qiyyam, dhikr – all are training that help me become a better person.

How do we keep it going?

You typically do not hear this but we won't be able to keep Ramaḍān going – it is a special time, there is something different about Ramaḍān, the entire community fasting for an entire month together. When we set up an unrealistic goal, how can we achieve that? The objective is not to literally keep Ramaḍān going.

Shawwal has started. What is practical? How can we make an effort? How can keep that same zeal, energy, dhikr, taqwā, ṣalāḥ, same connection to Allāh going?

About fasting Allāh says: La a 'la kum tattaqoon

Taqwa is at the end of the āyah, at the end of this training what do we want? Taqwā is what I want to walk away with. Ramaḍān is gone and Shawwal is here, then Dhul Qadah and Dhul Hajjah. I can not keep Ramaḍān here but what I can keep is being aware, being cognizant of my choices, I can keep consciousness of Allāh SWT, that is something we can keep going.
2 Simple Thoughts
If you have more or if you already have your objectives laid out, than that is great but for people at my level, who don't know where to go after this awesome month.- who are thinking 'I don't know where to go, what do I do in the days after 'Id?'

Consistency - strive to achieve consistency, not with what you were doing in the whole month of Ramaḍān, but pinpoint something, even it is: 'I will read Qurʾān ten minutes a day, I didn't read Qurʾān before' **Find something that you didn't do before Ramaḍān and do it now.**

'I pray 5 times but do not come to masjid so everyday I will come to the masjid once a day, I will pray Fajr at the masjid, start my day right. Coming home from work instead of crashing in front of a TV, I will come to the masjid at least once a day. I will pray in Jama'ah, with the community.' Find something small and gain consistency with that ie, I will put a quarter in the sadaqa box at home and when it fills up I will bring it to the masjid. The best of deeds are those that are done consistently – long lasting. The Prophet of Allāh (ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam)

*And the most beloved of good deeds to Allāh is that in which a person persists, even if it is little.*
Narrated by Bukhāri, 43; Muslim, 782.

The word used is Wa in kal- even if they are very little. The word for very small is also very small too- kalla. Two letters repeat each other, squish them together, a small verb, making idgham, a minimum of a three letter word becomes a 2 letter word, small word, just a little bit. This is the part of the eloquence of the Arabic language.

So I will do a good deed EVERY single day, I will find consistency.

Another hadith of the Prophet that I found in Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhāri, is about a person, who is consistently doing a good deed and does it in routine, now one day you get sick or your boss tells you to go to another field office, something comes up and you weren't able to do the deed for the day. Allāh tells the angels to still write down the reward for him. Allāh says yes, because that a part of life, my slave made the full effort, he made the effort routinely, give him the full reward.

**A convergence of events**- Ramaḍān is ending and our kids are going back to school, our youth are going back to school, they have to make choices everyday, good or bad, good or bad, every day.
In Sūrah Ash-Shūraā’ 42:25, Allāh tells us who He is.

And He it is Who accepts repentance from His slaves, and forgives sins, and He knows what you do.

He continues (madare form, action renews itself) to accept taubah (repentance) from his slaves and continues to wipe away the sins. Taubah is making a u-turn, you start making a choice and going down a path and then say to yourself ‘No’ and turn around and come back to him. He continues to wipe away sins, He embraces you in His Mercy and any baggage that you are coming with, is brushed away.

wa ya’fu an sayyiaat

You will not be perfect, you may not always meet your goals, you may be really disappointed in yourself, just make that u-turn, don't worry about it. He will wipe it away, turn around comeback to Allāh, follow it up with a good deed, – realize that you will mess up, keep returning back to Allāh.

wa ya’lamu ma tafa’loon

That waw is a waw haaliya and in English it mean even though, he continues to accept repentance from his slaves and wipe away the sins even though He knows what you will do tomorrow but today He will forgive you.

That is who we are dealing with- He who accepts and forgives you even though he knows what you are going to do tomorrow. Allāh (subḥānahu wa ta’āla) knows that you will mess up today, He continues to forgive even though he knows we will mess up. Keep returning back to Allāh over and over again. If you follow up a bad deed with a good deed, not only will He will wipe away the sins and he will take your sins and convert them into good deeds for you.
Ramadan Mubarak to everyone! I hope your fasts and prayers are accepted by The Almighty. I feel there can't be a better time for this post than in Ramadan. This is the method I used to memorize in Qur'an back in hifdh school. I used this technique to memorize the Qur'an, alhamdulillah. And until now, I feel it's the reason I've been leading tarawil for close to five years now, alhamdulillah.

Memorizing Qur'an

It's important to understand that this process is broken into 3 categories:

1) new lesson,
2) new memorization,
3) old memorization.

I'll give a brief intro to each category and then show you how to properly memorize within each fold. It's important to understand that memorizing Qur'an for the long-term is a process which takes close to a month. Once you memorize an āyah, it won't be solid until you repeat it a number of times until it enters the deeper part of your brain.

New Lesson

This is where you will be memorizing from scratch. If you are serious about memorizing, you'll need to follow these tips exactly as they are written below.

1) Read the page 10 times while looking in from the top.
2) Read the first āyah on the page 10 times while looking in.
3) Now read the same verse 10 times without looking at it, until you can recite it without any mistakes.
4) Begin connecting the ayahs. Recite the first and second āyah together without looking in and without mistakes.
5) Keep connecting the ayaat on the page. Each time you connect a new āyah, go back to the top of the page and read till the āyah you've memorized.
6) When you reach the last āyah, you should recite the whole page from the top without looking and without any mistakes.
7) Recite the page from memory to someone. You should have zero mistakes.
8) You can repeat the above steps as needed to have a perfect page memorized.

New Memorization

This is the amount of Qur'an which you've memorized in the last 30 days. Take this part seriously, it'll determine if the ayaat you memorized will be solid for your life or not. (Retaining/reviewing Qur'an is a 25 day process. After those 25 days, reviewing once a month will suffice. This will lead to the 'old memorization' which we'll speak about).
1) Whatever you review in this section, you MUST recite it to someone who has either memorized the ayaat or is well-versed in reading the Qur'an.
2) If you've memorized five pages in the last five days, you must recite them to yourself until you don't make any errors. Then go recite it to a teacher.
3) From this point on, whatever you memorize, it MUST be read daily. When I say read, it means reviewed to yourself without mistakes AND recited to someone else.
4) If for some reason you didn't review your 'new memorization' for the day, then don't memorize new ayaat. You're pouring water into a cup w/ a hole. Each day you don't review the 'new memorization,' you're making the hole in your cup bigger and bigger until you won't remember anything! (If you did not review a page for seven days consecutively, go back to the 'new lesson' and re-memorize the page).
5) I sound somewhat redundant here, because I can't lay anymore importance on how much you need to review the 'new memorization.' It'll make/break your hifdh.
6) If you memorize a page a day, you'll finish a juz in 20 days. After these twenty days, take five extra days to review the whole juz with someone proficient.
7) The juz you've memorized will now be considered part of your 'old memorization.'

Old Memorization

This is anything you've reviewed for at least twenty-five days consecutively. The amount you review depends on how much Qur'an you've memorized. Once you've memorized the Qur'an (which I pray is soon for all of you seeking to memorize it), new lessons and new memorizations will come to a halt, and you'll be left with the old memorization. This will continue for the left of our lives till death does us part.

1) Daily review

1) Between 1-3 juz, you should review five pages daily.
2) Between 4-7 juz you should review 10 pages (which equals half the juz) daily.
3) Between 7-15 juz, you should review 20 pages (which equals one juz) daily.
4) Between 15-20 juz, you should review 30 pages (which equals 1.5 juz) daily.
5) Between 20-30 juz, you should review 60 pages (which equals 2 juz) daily.

2) Read the juz to yourself then recite to a teacher/hafidh.
This process will continue for the rest of your life.

3) In the 'old memorization,' you should not get more than four mistakes, or four stutters in a juz.

A mistake classifies as reading something incorrectly and not being able to correct it. A stutter classifies reading something incorrectly, being sent back a few ayahs to correct it, and finally reading it correctly. At the same time, you should be make more than one mistake or one stutter for every five pages you read.
**Concluding remarks**

- When I found a verse to be hard, I would look into the mushaf and write it somewhere. At times I would also listen to recitations to ease the memorization for me (I recommend Sh. Husary). Sometimes looking in and repeating it won't make the verse stick, so do whatever it takes to memorize it!
- If you falter somewhat in the old memorization, it's ok. Just don't miss two to three days at once. Reading Qur'an is a lifetime endeavor.
- Reviewing is more important than memorizing.
- Focus on perfecting your 'new lesson' and 'new memorization.'
- If you feel some part isn't strong, give preference to reviewing that part rather than memorizing something new.
- Read something EVERYDAY. Not only should we do this as students of hifdh, but it should be our habit as Muslims. I'm saying, don't say “I've memorized an x amount of Qur'an today, so no need to read and reflect.” Take out some time to read and reflect on a few verses daily.

This is the optimal method which I found easy for myself to memorize. It was formulated in my fourteen-year-old mind as a Qur'an student who found it hard to memorize Allâh's book. I asked Allâh’s help, and I feel this method was his answer. I hope Allâh facilitates the memorization of His book for you all, and blesses you with a positively unforgettable Ramadan where you achieve all the goals of your lives.
Parables in the Qur’an: The Light of Allah – Sadaf Farooqi

Ramadan is a month that allows Muslims to reconnect with the Qur’ān and take a breather from their worldly activities to focus on their relationship with Allāh. It is basically like hitting the “pause” button on our life, which is an action-packed adventure, in order to take a relaxing, spiritual hiatus. This “break” allows us to relax and reflect, especially during the day, when there are no coffee, snack or lunch breaks to distract us. The empty stomach, contrary to popular belief, causes our minds and memories to become a tad sharper, facilitating more devoted worship and remembrance of Allāh (dhikr).

There are some verses of the Qur’ān in which Allāh explains things to us using deep, meaningful parables that invite us to use all our pondering abilities in order to understand them fully. I have selected one such verse – a personal favorite – to write this post about, in order to invite readers to reflect upon its meaning.

_Surah Al-Nur_ usually brings to mind the verses of hijab for Muslim women. The reason this surah is named “Al-Nur” however, is because of this verse, in which Allāh describes the heart of a believer and the faith that resides in it using the analogy of light:

> اللهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كَمَثَّلُ نُورٍ كِبْرَىٰ فِيهِ مُصَبِّحٌ
> الْيَضِيعُ فِي رَجَالٍ رَجَالٍ كَانَتِهِ كَكَبْرٍ ذَٰلِكَ يُوقِدُهُ مَنْ شَجَرَ
> مَّبَتِّعَةٌ رَبُّهُ رَبُّ الْيَمِينِ لَأَشْرَقَىَّ وَلَا غَرْبَىَّ يَكُونُ رَبُّ يَضِيعٍ يَضِيعُ
> تَمْسَّسْهُ نَارُ نُورٍ عَلَىٰ نُورٍ يَهْدِي‌ۡ آلِهَةِ لِنُورِهِ مِنْ يَسَانٍ وَيُضِيعُ يَلِي‌ۡمُ

“Allāh is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His light is as if it were a niche containing a lamp; the lamp is [enclosed] in glass, the glass [shining] like a radiant star: [a lamp] lit from a blessed tree – an olive-tree that is neither of the east nor of the west, the oil whereof [is so bright that it] would well-nigh give light [of itself] even though fire had not touched it: light upon
light! Allāh guides unto His light him that wills [to be guided]; and [to this end] Allāh propounds parables unto men, since Allāh [alone] has full knowledge of all things." [24:35]

We can gauge the depth of this verse of the Qurʾān just by taking a look at the number of things Allāh that has mentioned in it:

1. Niche
2. Lamp
3. Glass
4. Radiant star
5. Blessed olive tree
6. East and the West (directions)
7. Oil
8. Light
9. Fire

The Tafsir

Allāh Ṵuṣūr al-ṣūmūt wa-l-әržūn
`Ali bin Abi Talhah reported that Ibn `Abbas said, “Allāh is the Light of the heavens and the earth” means that Allāh is ‘the Guide’ of the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth.

Ibn Jurayj said: “Mujahid and Ibn `Abbas said concerning this verse, “Allāh is the Light of the heavens and the earth”, that He is controlling their affairs and their stars and sun and moon.”

As-Suddi said concerning it, “Allāh is the Light of the heavens and the earth”, by His (Allāh’s) Light, the heavens and earth are illuminated.

In the two sahihs (Bukhāri and Muslim), it is recorded that Ibn `Abbas, (may Allāh be pleased with him), said, “When the Messenger of Allāh got up to pray at night, he would say:

O Allāh, to You be praise, You are the Sustainer of heaven and earth and whoever is in them. To You be praise, You are the Light of the heavens and the earth and whoever is in them.”

It was narrated that Ibn Mas`ud said, “There is no night or day with your Lord; the Light of the Throne comes from the Light of His Face.”

Tafsīr Maudūdī expounds, “Light is something which makes things visible; which is itself manifest and helps make other things manifest. The human mind conceives light in this very sense. Absence of light is termed darkness, invisibility and obscurity. On the other hand, when there is visibility and things become exposed to view, man says there is light. Allāh has been called 'Light' in this basic sense, and not in the sense of a beam of light which travels at the speed of 186,000 miles per second and stimulates the optic nerve through the retina. This conception of light has nothing to do with the reality of the meaning for which human mind has coined this word.”
"The parable of 'his' Light" - there are two views concerning the meaning of the pronoun (his):
1. The first is that it refers to Allāh, may He be glorified and exalted, meaning that the parable of His guidance in the heart of the believer is "..as a niche". This was the view of Ibn `Abbas.
2. The second view is that the pronoun "his" in "his light" refers to the believer, which is indicated by the context of the words and implies that the parable of the light in the heart of the believer is as a niche. So the heart of the believer and what he is naturally inclined to, of guidance and what he learns of the Qur'an, which is in accordance with his natural inclinations are, as Allāh says:

Can they who rely on a clear proof from their Lord, and whom a witness from Him recites it (can they be equal with the disbelievers"[:11:17]. The heart of the believer in its purity and clarity is likened to a lamp in transparent and jewel-like glass, and the Qur'an and shari'ah by which it is guided are likened to good, pure, shining oil in which there is no impurity or deviation.

"...as (if there were) a niche..." Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Muḥammad bin Ka`b and others said, "This refers to the position of the wick in the lamp." This is well-known, and hence Allāh then says:

...and within it a lamp - this is the flame that burns brightly. Or it was said that the niche is a niche in the house. This is the parable given by Allāh of obedience towards Him. Allāh calls obedience to Him as light, then He calls it by other numerous names as well. Ubayy bin Ka`b said, "The lamp is the light (Al-Nur) and this refers to the Qur'an and the faith that is in his heart." As-Suddi said, "It is the lamp."

"...the lamp is in a glass" - this means that this light is shining in a clear glass. Ubayy bin Ka`b and others said, "This is the likeness of the heart of the believer."

".....the glass as it were a star durriyyun" - some authorities recite the word durriyyun with addammah on the daal and without a hamzah, which means pearls, i.e., as if it were a star made of pearls (durr). Others recite it as dirri’un or durri’un, with a kasrah on the daal, or dammah on the daal, and with a hamzah at the end, which means reflection (dir’), because if something is shone on the star, it becomes brighter than at any other time. The Arabs call the stars they do not know darari. Ubayy bin Ka`b said, "A shining star". Qataadah said: "Huge, bright and clear."

".....lit from a blessed tree" – this means, it is derived from olive oil, from a blessed tree.
...an olive - this refers to the blessed tree mentioned previously.

“......neither of the east nor of the west” - this means that it is not in the eastern part of the land so that it does not get any sun in the first part of the day, nor is it in the western part of the land so that it is shaded from the sun before sunset, but it is in a central position where it gets sun from the beginning of the day until the end, so its oil is good and pure and shining. Ibn Abi Hatim recorded that Ibn `Abbas commented on:

“......an olive, neither of the east nor of the west” - this is a tree in the desert, which is not shaded by any other tree or mountain or cave, i.e. nothing covers it, and this is best for its oil.”

Mujahid commented on:

by saying: “It is not in the east, where it will get no sun when the sun sets, nor is it in the west where it will get no sun when the sun rises, but it is in a position where it will get sun both at sunrise and sunset.” Sa`id bin Jubayr commented on:

..by saying, “This is the best kind of oil. When the sun rises it reaches the tree from the east and when it sets it reaches it from the west, so the sun reaches it morning and evening, so it is not counted as being in the east or in the west.”

“......whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself), though no fire touched it.” `Abdur-Rahman bin Zayd bin Aslam said, “(this means) because the oil itself is shining”.

"...Light upon Light!" - Al-`Awfi narrated from Ibn `Abbas that this meant the faith and deeds of a person. As-Suddi said: “...Light upon Light!”: “Light of the fire and the light of the oil. When they are combined, they give light, and neither of them can give light without the other”. Similarly the light of the Qur'ān and the light of faith give light when they are combined, and neither can do so without the other.”

“....Allāh guides to His Light whom He wills“: this means that Allāh shows the way to the ones whom He chooses, as it says in the hadith recorded by imām Ahmad from `Abdullāh bin `Amr, who said, “I heard the Messenger of Allāh [ ﷺ say:
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 إن الله تعالى خلق قلّة في ظلمة ثم ألقي عليهم من نوره بيمنيه فمن أصاب من نوره بيمنيه اهتدى ومن أخطأ ضل فذلك أولٌ: جف القلب على علم الله عز وجل

...Allāh created His creation in darkness, then on the same day He sent His Light upon them. Whoever was touched by His Light on that day will be guided and whoever was missed will be led astray. Hence I say: the pens have dried in accordance with the knowledge of Allāh, may He be glorified.”

ويضرب الله الأموات للناس والله يكلّم شئ عليهم

...And Allāh sets forth parables for mankind, and Allāh is All-Knower of everything”: Having mentioned this parable of the Light of His guidance in the heart of the believer, Allāh ends this verse with these words, which mean that He knows best who deserves to be guided and who deserves to be led astray.

Imām Ahmad recorded with a jayyid chain of narrators that Abu Sa`id Al-Khudri said, “The Messenger of Allāh [ وسلم عليه السلام] said:

القلوب أربعة: قلب أجرد فيه مثل السراج يزهر، وقلب أغفل مربوط على علائه، وقلب مكوس، وقلب مصفح. فما القلب الأجرد: فقلب المؤمن سراجا فيه نوره، وذهب القلب الأغفل فقلب الكافر، وأما القلب المكوس فقلب النافق، عرف ثم أدرك، وأما القلب المصفح فقلبه فيه إيمان ونفاق، ونفاق الإنسان فيه كمثل البلغة يبدع الطعام الطيب، ونفاق الإنسان فيه كمثل القرحة يبدع الطعام النافع، فأنا المذنبين غلبت على الأخرى غلبتي عليهم.

“Hearts are of four kinds:
1. The heart that is clear like a shining lamp;
2. The heart that is covered and tied up;
3. The heart that is upside-down; and
4. The heart that is clad in armor.
A Women’s Guide to Spirituality in Ramadan during Menstruation and Postnatal Bleeding – Kanika Aggarwal

Some information has been adapted from the following sources: Closed Doors and Opened Eyes: Spirituality for the Non-Fasting by Shazia Ahmad & A Muslim Day in Ramadan – Morning till Evening by Sh. Riad Quarzazi. Previously published in Sisters magazine August 2011 Issue

While others will be busy in acts of worship such as fasting, praying, reading Qur’an, etc., most women will spend a portion of Ramadan in the state of menstruation (or postnatal bleeding), leaving them unable to participate in the aforementioned activities.

It is not easy to stay positive at times like these, especially when we see those around us rushing to masâjid for taraweeh prayers, spending time in ‘itikaaf and reciting the Qur'an. This can lead us to feeling deprived of the reward of this blessed month, and often this feeling ends up decreasing our spirituality rather than increasing it.

Our menstrual cycles (or postnatal bleeding) are a part of Allâh subhaana wa ta’ala’s creation and something that is ordained by Him. Allâh subhaana wa ta’ala tells us in the Qur'an that “He has created us in the best of molds” [At-Teen:4]. We are also told that Allâh has “appointed a due proportion” [At-Talaq:2-3] for everything and that “for every matter there is an appointed time given” [Ar-Rad:38]. [1] Thus, to complain about it would be to question the Wisdom of Allâhsubhaana wa ta’ala. This is not anything to feel sad or inconvenienced about, but rather it should be accepted as part of the Divine Wisdom.

This same message was conveyed to us by Ayesha radi Allahu ‘anha via the hadith of the Prophet sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam. Ayesha narrates that, “We set out with the sole intention of performing Hajj and when we reached Sarif, my menses began. The Messenger of Allâh sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam came to me while I was crying and asked, ‘What is the matter with you? Has your menses started?’ I replied, ‘Yes.’ He said, This is something which Allâh has destined for the daughter of Adam.” (Al-Hakim)

Islam is the straight path that leads to the pleasure of Allâh subhanaa wa ta’ala and ultimate success in the aakhirah. However, praise be to Allâh, the path of Islam is broad, i.e. there is a huge variety of good deeds one can do to come closer to Allâh subhaana wa ta’ala.
Likewise, there are many other ways of achieving spirituality while we are on our menses (or going through postnatal bleeding) besides ṣalāh, siyaam and 'itikaaf. This was exemplified for us through the practice of the wife of the Prophet sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam.

Narrated Maimuna, the wife of the Prophet sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam, “During my menses, I never prayed, but used to sit on the mat beside the mosque of Allāh's Apostle…” (Bukhārī)

Here are a few practical suggestions of good deeds that a Muslimah can do while she is menstruating or has postnatal bleeding.

**At the time of the adhān:**

- Repeat after the adhān
- Make du’ā’ for the intercession of the Prophet sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam after the adhān
- Allaahumma Rabba haathihid-dā wa’tit-taammati wassalaatil-qaa’imati, ‘aati Muḥammadanil-waseelata walhuwa maqa’amal-mahmoodanil-latheel, wa’adalu, [‘innaka laa tukhliful-mee’aad] (O Allāh, Lord of this perfect call and established prayer. Grant Muḥammad the intercession and favor, and raise him to the honored station You have promised him, [verily You do not neglect promises]).
  [Reference: Bukhārī & Bayhaqi]
- Make du’ā’ between the adhān and iqāama. Invocation during this time is not rejected.

**When you wake up:**

- “Alhamdu lillaahi-latheee ‘ahyaanaa ba’da ma’a’amaatanaa wa’ilayhin-nushoor.” (Praise is to Allāh Who gives us life after He has caused us to die and to Him is the return.)
  [Reference:Bukhārī]
- “Laa ‘illaha ‘illallahu wahdahu la shareeka lahu, lahu mulku wa lahu-hamdu, wa Huwa ‘alaa kulli shay’in Qadeer Subhaanallahi, walaamdu lillaahi, wa laa ‘ilaha ‘illallahu, wallaahu ‘akbar, wa laa hawla wa laa Quwwata ‘illaa billaahi-‘Aliyyil-‘Adheem, Rabbighfir lee.” (There is none worth of worship but Allāh alone, Who has no partner, His is the dominion and to Him belongs all praise, and He is able to do all things. Glory is to Allāh. Praise is to Allāh. There is none worth of worship but Allāh. Allāh is the Most Great. There is no might and no power except byAllāh's leave, the Exalted, the Mighty. My Lord, forgive me.)
  [Reference: Bukhārī]

**In the Morning (after fajr) / Evening (before maghrib):**

khalfahum, wa laa yuheetoona bishay'ìm-min 'ilmihi 'illaa bimaa shaa'a, wasi'a kursiyyuhus samaawaati wal'ardh, wa laa ya'ooduhu hifdhuhumaa, wa Huwal- 'Aliyyul- 'Adheem." (I seek refuge in Allāh from Satan the outcast. – Allāh! There is none worthy of worship but He, the Ever Living, the One Who sustains and protects all that exists. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is he that can intercede with Him except with His Permission? He knows what happens to them in this world, and what will happen to them in the Hereafter. And they will never encompass anything of His Knowledge except that which He wills. His Throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.) [Reference: Al Hakim]

• Recite Surat'l-Ikhlaas, Surat'l-Falaq, Surat'l-Nas – 3 times each in morning and evening [Reference: Abu Dawud & Tirmidhi]
• More morning and evening adhkaar can be found here: http://www.islamawareness.net/du'ā'/Fortress/027.html
• Suggested Task: Read an English translation of half a juz of the Qur'an after fajr and beforemaghrib to complete 1 juz a day inshā'Allāh

During afternoon time:

• Listen to an Islamic lecture or read an Islamic book

At maghrib time:

• Help people break their fast by offering them dates and water
• Host an iftaar for family and guests

At isha time:

• Have family circle time at home and have a member of the house recite the Qur'an to the rest of the family followed by tafseer of those ayaat

Before sleeping:

• Cup your palms together, blow gently into them and recite Surat'l-Ikhlaas, Surat'l-Falaq, and Surat'l-Nas. Then pass your hands over as much of your body as you can reach, beginning with the head and then face, then the entire front of your body. Do this three times. [Reference: Bukhāri]
• Recite Ayat'l-Kursi. [Reference: Bukhāri]
• Recite last 2 verses of Surat'l-Baqarah. [Reference: Bukhāri]
• Recite Surah Mulk. [Reference: An Nasai]
• More on “what to say before sleeping” can be found here: http://www.islamawareness.net/du’a/Fortress/028.html

Other acts that you can do:

At the masjid:
• Shake hands with sisters and spread salaam at the masjid, especially engaging with newcomers.
• Sponsor iftaars at various masājid if possible
• Volunteer for masjid clean up afterwards [1]
• Babysit during taraweeh so that the mothers (and everyone else!) can pray with khushu’ and concentration [1]
• Make a CD of beautiful Qur’an recitation and du’as and distribute it at the masjid [1]

At home:
• Have a qiyaam program for other sisters at your house – prepare iftaar and suhoor for them
• Look for new converts, those who are newly practicing or people who have lost touch with the community and invite them over for iftaar and ‘Īd [1]
• Think of ‘Īd party ideas/gifts for family, spouse, children, neighbors and begin your preparations.

In your own time:
• Memorize ayaat of the Qur’an.
• Donate – clothes, food, toys, money etc.
• Make tawbah (repentance) and shukr (gratitude)
• Memorize Allāh’s names and their meanings [1]. Use them in making personal du’ā’. 
• Visit the sick in your area or at the hospital [1].
• Always keep your tongue moist with the dhikr of Allāh subhaana wa ta’aala. SaysubḥānAllāh, alhamduillāh, La ilaaha illallah, Allahu Akbar and send salaams and salawaat on the Prophet sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam while cooking, cleaning, driving, etc.

I sincerely pray that this Ramadan all of us witness an increase in our spirituality and a betterment in the relationship we have with Allāh subhaana wa ta’aala. May Allāh allow us to witness the blessed month of Ramadan and give us the opportunity to perform acts of ibaadah that weigh heavy on the scales on the Day of Judgment, āmīn.

[1] These ideas were co-opted from Sr Shazia Ahmed's article which can be found on SuhaibWebb.com.
Will You Be a Better Person After Ramadan? – Yasir Qadhi (Transcribed by Sameera Thakore)

Here we are, having finished yet another Ramadan. Having been blessed with yet another Ramadan. It feels like yesterday I stood before you for the first khatirah and the entire masjid was as packed as it was today. It is as if it was yesterday when we were wondering how we are going to go through all of these 30 days. The summer months fasting. This is the difficult fasting of July and August, and we were wondering how it was going to finish. The month is as if it only came by literally one hour ago.

Such is it with time and such is it with Ramadan. This is how Allāh ﷻ has blessed us with a small window. Allāh says in the Qur'ān “a limited number of days.” There are just a few, limited number of days. If you look at it, brothers and sisters – let’s be honest here – the physical side of us is kind of looking forward to the month finishing in that we don’t have to worry about the long days, the hectic iftars, rushing to the masjid and fighting with the parking lot.

Post-Ramadan Blues

Wallahi, brothers and sisters, there is also a more rational and spiritual side that is dreading the end of this month. Why? Because we will miss Ramadan and everything about Ramadan. We are going to miss fasting for the sake of Allāh and feeling thirsty in the daytime knowing that Allāh ﷻ is rewarding us. We are going to miss giving up our sleep. We are going to miss the halaawah of listening to the Qur’an. We are going to miss the pleasure of every day – forget the iftar, far more sweeter than that is the brotherhood of Islam and the jam-packed masjids and seeing your Muslim brothers and sisters from across the city.

Brothers and sisters, we have been through many Ramadans. After Ramadan, we develop the post-Ramadan blues. We really miss the spirit of Ramadan. We miss everything about it, which shows us that one of the main wisdoms of Ramadan is an often overlooked wisdom. One of the main benefits of Ramadan is something that is usually sidelined. Perhaps the main benefit – we already said Qur’an, fasting, so many khutbahs and duroos – is that Ramadan reintroduces to the religion of Islam.

Sweetness of Īmān
Ramadan makes us feel the pleasure of being a Muslim. Ramadan allows us to taste what the Prophet ( ﷺ ) called halaawat’l-îmān. He ( ﷺ ) said îmān has a taste and that the person has tasted îmān. There is an after effect of îmān. How does it taste? The Prophet ( ﷺ ) said there is a sweetness of îmān.

Every one of us sitting here today has tasted that sweetness and has become addicted to the tilawah, the brotherhood, the masājid, the Qur'an, the dhikr, the du’ā’, the ibadah. We are reintroduced to what it truly means to worship Allāh ( ﷺ ). In that process, we rediscover over and over again a fundamental fact: there is nothing sweeter than worshipping Allāh. There is no feeling on earth that can leave you as fulfilled and as happy and as productive as worshipping Allāh ( ﷺ ).

Your bodies are tired, your throats are dry, your sleep has been deprived, but I could not pay you a million dollars to feel like you feel right now, knowing that you fasted every day of this month and knowing that you struggled and have attended tarawih and have raised the bar. You feel like you have done something because you have done something that is truly the only productive thing that you can do, which is the worship of Allāh. Everything that you do for the dunya comes and goes. Everything that I do and you do for this dunya is all going to go, no matter what you do or how big of a house you built. Deep down inside you know that this is not what it is really all about. What you do for the sake of Allāh ( ﷺ ) and for the sake of the akhirah truly remains. That is dar'l-akhirah. Allāh ( ﷺ ) said, “Dar'l-akhirah is the real life.” Whatever we do for that hereafter is what makes us feel as if there is no other feeling in the world.

The Pleasure of a Relationship with Allāh

This is why, brothers and sisters, one of the biggest benefits of Ramadan and perhaps the biggest wisdom is that Allāh ( ﷺ ) facilitates for us and gifts us some sweets – the sweetness of Islam, the sweetness of îmān, the sweetness of living like a Muslim. You know what happens when we go to a good restaurant or have a fancy dessert, we love it and want to go again. We tell everyone about the dessert place because when you taste something sweet, you want it over and over and over again.

Ramadan introduces us to the greatest of all pleasures, which is the pleasure of having a relationship with Allāh and being a true servant of Allāh ( ﷺ ). There is no pleasure that is
greater than this pleasure, which is why Allāh has told us in the Qur'an that in
worshipping Allāh, we will find our ultimate pleasure and happiness. Allāh tells us in
the Qur'an, “O you who believe, respond, harken, obey to the call of Allāh and His Messenger
whenever they call you to that which will give you your life back.” This is what the Qur'an
says. Stand up, listen to anything that Allāh and His Messenger say when they call you to
that which will give you hayaat. This is exactly what Ramadan does. We feel alive again
because this is the real life – the life of the soul, the life of the ruh, the life of the heart. This
is far more important than the life of the body.

I already spoke a few weeks ago about how in Ramadan, we intentionally weaken the body
and make it secondary because when we push the bodies' urges and needs aside, the spirit
rises up. When we neglect the body, the soul takes over. That is why Allāh tells us
“don't take care of the body, I'll take care of it. Don't eat. Don't drink. I'll take care of
you.” What does that allow us to do? The opportunity to concentrate on the soul. The soul
feels more aware. Sadly, the īmān of every one of us won't be the same two weeks from
now. We all know this. The īmān that we feel right here and now is not going to be the same
one month from now. This is the reality. We feel alive.

Allāh says in the Qur'an that this Qur'an contains in it your ruh. The Qur'an is called
your ruh because when you follow the Qur'an, you become alive again. The Qur'an is called
your nur. In the first khatirah I gave, we talked about Surat'l-Baqarah and mentioned the
motif of light and how Allāh describes the Qur'an, Islam, and hidayah as light. All of this goes
back to light and life is what we need to live. Our Prophet felt the hilawah in
worshipping Allāh and knew what it meant to worship Allāh. That is why when a
problem happened to him, what did he do? Aishah tells us, “If something gave him
problems…”

Before I finish the hadith, let me ask a question to me and you. When you have a bad day at
work, when you have an argument with your wife, when you have a problem with your kids,
how do you relax yourself? Let's be honest here. Most of us turn on the Shaytan, which is
called the waster of time. It is one of the biggest ways we relax ourselves, or we may surf the
net or check Facebook statuses or what not. We think this will calm us down.

Aishah says, “If something caused him any problems, he would immediately rush to
the ṣalāh.” Why? He realized re-establishing the connection with Allāh will calm you
down. That is what will bring about peace. This is why when it was time for the ṣalāh and if
Bilal was a little late, he would say, “Bilal, where are you? We want the pleasure of ṣalāh! Give us the sweetness of the relationship with Allāh 🙏🏻!”

### Raising the Bar

The sad fact of the matter is that we are not as good Muslims as we should be. In Ramadan, every one of us raises the bar. This is one of the blessings of Allāh. Anyone who has an atom's weight of īmān, māshā'Allāh tabarakAllāh in Ramadan they raise the bar. If they are not praying, they began to pray. If they are not praying sunnah, they pray sunnah. If they pray sunnah, they start praying tahajjud. If they read one page of Qur'an a day, they start reading ten pages a day. This is the Sunnah of Allāh.

Brothers and sisters, every one of us has raised the bar this month. When we raised the bar, what have we discovered? Raising the bar is not that difficult. In fact, the rewards and pleasure are worth it. Now that Ramadan is over, what are we going to do after this? Are we going to back to where it all began? Are we going to go back to our previous lifestyles? If that is the case, then the fact of the matter is that Ramadan has not truly benefitted us. Allāh gave us the dessert, but apparently we didn't taste the sweetness because we aren't interested in tasting it again and again and again.

One of the signs of Allāh having accepted a good deed, as our scholars of the past say, is that you are better after the deed than before it. If you go for Hajj, you better come back changed, or else your Hajj is useless. That is the reality of what Islam and the Qur'an and Sunnah teaches us. When you have had a momentous blessing of Allāh 🙏🏻, it should show in your daily life. That is why the scholars say that those who go for Hajj and come back the same, it is as if Hajj did not have any impact on them. The same goes for any blessing.

Ramadan is one such blessing. We have been blessed with another Ramadan. Allāh knows how many more Ramadans we are going to have. Brothers and sisters, every one of us knows people who were not with us last Ramadan. A time will come when people will be remembering us as well. “Fulan so-and-so used to be amongst us,” and we are not going to be there. Allāh knows when our last Ramadan is.

The point of Ramadan is that we rise up maybe a hundred or a thousand, and when Ramadan finishes, nobody can maintain that because it is too much, but don't go falling and crashing back down to where you began Ramadan. All of us will dip a little bit and cannot maintain it, but when we go down, if we have raised up 100 levels, then go down 30, 40, or 50, but down go crashing back down by 100. If we have raised ourselves, 1000 steps, then go down 300 or
400 but raise the bar so that every time Ramadan comes, we find ourselves better Muslims at the end of the month than before the month.

Anyone who is not praying five times a day, brothers and sisters, for how long? For how long are we going to delude ourselves? The bare minimal requirement of being just a practicing Muslim is the five daily salawat. Let us make this our habit from today that “khalas, Ramadan has taught me that being a Muslim is beautiful and something that I can enjoy and makes me feel alive.” From today, no more excuses! Five daily salawat.

**Consistency**

Those of us who were not reading the Qur'an read a little bit in Ramadan. Okay, khalas, you cannot read a juz a day, but read a page a day, two pages a day, half a page a day. Have some daily relationship with the book of Allah. This is your breakfast, brothers and sisters. Your real breakfast is reading the Qur'an. If you don't have your breakfast, you can't function. If you don't read Qur'an every day, then your soul will not have its food. Have some breakfast. Have something to do with the Qur'an.

We all gave some charity. We can't all give 5K, 10K, 20K every month of the year, but still have some regular recurring charity. Sponsor an orphan for $40 a month. Every Friday, give $5 to the masjid. Give something for your mother and father. Have something regular. Our Prophet said, “The most beloved of all deeds in the eyes of Allah are those that are the most consistent or regular, even if it is something small.” A dollar a day. A dollar a week. Five dollars a week. A page a day. Something that is consistent.

Ramadan has taught us consistency. Every day fasting. Every day tarawih. Every day Qur'an. subhanAllah, brothers and sisters, every one of us was thinking, “How can I fast 16-17 hours with no food or drink?” The day before Ramadan, you are drinking all day because it is more than 100 degrees outside. Now it is as if it is not even an issue, and you are completely used to it.

Shaytan will come to us the day of 'Id, brothers and sisters. The time of maghrib will come and go and nobody will even remember about it. Whereas before this, to the millisecond we were checking the watch. We have memorized the daily salawat timings and on the day of 'Id, we forget and don't even remember what time maghrib is. It is completely lost. We have been fasting 30 solid days, and after that it is as if we don't even know what the word fasting means until the next Ramadan comes.
This is a reminder to myself and all of you. Once a month, once a week, have a bare minimum to do something regular. We prayed an hour and a half of tarawih. We are not going to do this every night. Maybe for ten minutes when you go home after isha, pray something extra. Have some relationship with Allāh ﷻ. Next Ramadan, raise the bar and raise the bar and raise the bar until one day we will meet Allāh ﷻ and every year will be better than the previous one. What a beautiful track record! We will show Allāh ﷻ: “O Allāh, every year you gave me, I was a better person. I was looking forward to meeting you. This is my book! Come and read it!” This is the attitude of the Muslim: to be positive, energetic, optimistic.

Brothers and sisters, the real halaawah is the halaawah of īmān. Al-Hasan al-Basri ﷺ, the famous ascetic, said, “You seek pleasure? You seek happiness? You will only find it in one of three things, and if you don't find it in three things, then know that the door of happiness has been shut for you, and you are not going to find it anywhere else. 1 – ṣalāh, 2 – qira'at'l-Qur'an, 3 – dhikrullah.” This is where you find happiness: ṣalāh, Qur'an, dhikr. If you are not going to find happiness in these three things, you are not going to find it anywhere else. Another famous scholar of the past said, “If the princes and the playboys knew how much pleasure we have in our hearts, then those playboys who are messing around thinking they are enjoying the world and the princes and millionaires knew how we felt of happiness, they would kill us with swords to get the happiness out of our hearts.”

This is the reality, brothers and sisters, that every one of us in Ramadan experiences ourselves. I will ask you again: can a million dollars make you feel as productive as you feel after fasting Ramadan? Could a million dollars make you feel as if you have done something worthy and proud? You feel “alḥamdulillāh, great! I have done it!” That feeling of fulfillment only comes when you have a relationship with Allāh. Brothers and sisters, the month is over, but the Lord is the same. The time is finished, but our lives still have some time. Ramadan is over, but Allāh ﷻ has blessed us with more life and we pray for many more years, but eventually that must come to an end. Every one of us will come to an end, so let us pray that this Ramadan will be the first of many Ramadans where we raise the bar every single month. Let us pray that inshā'Allāh this Ramadan we are going to show ourselves and Allāh. We are allowed to show Allāh. Allāh says, “Say: do your deeds because Allāh will see your deeds.” We are allowed to show our deeds to the Prophet ﷺ. In other words, we are allowed to want the Prophet ﷺ to look at our deeds. The
Prophet ﷺ as well is going to be proud of the deeds of his ummah. We are allowed to do this to boast in front of Allāh, not in front of the people. “Oh Allāh, I did this for You.” Let every one of us make an intention that insha’Allāh this Ramadan we will show ourselves and Allāh ﷺ that we will be better Muslims. “Whatever deficiencies I have, I am going to raise the bar. I am not going to be perfect or an angel, but I will be better than I was before the month began.” That is the criterion: “I will be better than I was before the month began. Every Ramadan that will happen and I will continue to be better until I meet Allāh ﷺ.”

Brothers and sisters, prayer, ṣalāḥ, dhikr, Qur’an, recitation, being with the Muslims and the brotherhood, realizing we are an ummah – you and I both know that when we go to work and are the only Muslim there, you feel lonely and cut off. With the community, you feel alive. Every single day, 500 Muslims gathering to worship Allāh is all gone now. It’s not going to remain, but why should your attachment to the masjid be cut off? The masjid is so packed that people are standing and parking lots have a problem and come ‘Īd and the day after ‘Īd, we have two rows for prayer. Why? You are all living in the same city. You are all close to the masjid. Why should it be that the tilawah is heard every day and as soon as Ramadan is over, the Qur’an begins to gather dust until the next Ramadan? What type of attitude is this when Allāh has gifted us a Ramadan and allowed us to taste īmān? Let us continue that taste every day, every week, every month. Look at every door of good, whether it be ibadah, qira'ah, dhikr, sadaqah, and every one of us say, “insha’Allāh, a little bit more.” Not to the extent of Ramadan – we can’t do that. Just a little bit more.

Whatever Allāh ﷺ has allowed us to do. When you make the intention and take the step, Allāh ﷺ will make it easy. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Allāh says, 'Whoever walks toward Me one step, I walk towards him ten. Whoever comes to Me walking, I come to him running.” This is the beauty of Allāh ﷺ. This is the majesty of Allāh. You show the intention and try whatever you can and Allāh ﷺ will bless us with the rest.

May Allāh make this Ramadan an accepted Ramadan from all of us. May Allāh accept all of our fasting. May Allāh accept all of our qiyam.
May Allāh accept all of our recitation of the Qur’an. May Allāh free every one of us from His punishment and anger and the fire of Hell. May Allāh place us amongst the victorious.
Health

The New Ramadan Fitness Plan – Siraaj Muhammad

You may remember last year I wrote a post entitled Ramadan Fitness Plan in which I outlined the program I was following for fat loss, a plan which helped me lose 8 lbs during Ramadan '09. I continued training until my net weight loss was 48 lbs, alḥamdulillāh.

Since that time, I've both trained people in person and online, and I'm continuing my education in nutrition and training. While it's obvious that the majority of people don't train, what is less obvious is that the advice you've received over the years from fitness professionals is better geared towards people who are themselves already in the habit of being active.

What about the rest of us who never work out, who start and stop programs every 6 months, who have families, jobs, and kids to take care of, and now have the additional 'ibadah from Ramadan upon us? I know a lot of you feel compelled to try to lose some weight now because you'll be fasting, and what better time to lose weight than when you're not eating, right?

All wrong. Ramadan is not the time for changing your physical fitness habits. Your focus and priority is 'ibadah, not fat loss. A fit and healthy body is will definitely help you with your 'ibadah, but starting a fitness program on top of fasting and late night prayer is a train wreck waiting to happen. Instead, what I suggest is looking at your level of fitness, and incrementally adding tweaks to your eating and physical activity to begin the process.

The Food Plan

What food plan? You're fasting, right? There's just one problem – you're fasting. Slower metabolism. And then at night, you're eating more than what you normally would to make it back up. And, since we're in Ramadan, every variation of samosa and bakhlava is served before and after the main course. Every night. And then to add insult to injury, you eat again after taraweeh, and then go to sleep.

Without exception, the most important fitness activity you can do this Ramadan is please Allāh by following the Prophet's advice:

On the authority of Al-Miṣḍam ibn Madiy-Karib who said: I heard the Messenger of Allāhsaying, “No human ever filled a vessel worse than the stomach. Sufficient for any son of Adam are some morsels to
keep his back straight. But if it must be, then one third for his food, one third for his drink and one third for his breath.”

Whenever anyone asks me what training regimen they should do, the first question I ask them is about their eating, and it never fails, they're overeating. In most gatherings I've attended, I see well-circumferenced plates with food stacked vertically and horizontally.

What follows is a simple system for you to use, according to your level of discipline.

**Level 1: No Discipline / Control Over the Menu**

For those of you eating indiscriminately throughout the year, let's not talk at all about food quality, and let's focus solely on quantity. You know best-tasting foods will be placed in front of you everyday, you know you won't resist it, and you know if you try to discriminate and eat one item and not another, someone will harass you about it.

Go ahead and eat a little bit of everything, but make sure the quantity stays low. Meaning, take slow measured bites, and keep checking if you have that gnawing feeling in your stomach you had earlier when you were fasting. If it goes away, stop eating immediately and save the rest of your food for later. Snack a little on dessert, and you're done. Have some tea, and eat just a little bit after taraweeh.

Make sure you have suhoor in the morning, and make sure it's simply a normal sized meal, and don't worry about stuffing yourself for the day – it doesn't work. Do make sure you're well-hydrated, though.

**Level 2: Some Discipline / Say in the Menu**

If this describes you, then focus on bringing some balance to your plate – instead of piling on rice or naan, take much smaller portions of rice and naan, and add more meat and vegetables. Don't worry too much about fat, it'll be out and about. Make sure to keep the quantity of food reasonable, as described in Level 1.

**Level 3: Total Control**

- **Proteins**: Lean, complete proteins from chicken, turkey, beef, or whey protein shakes of your choice.
- **Carbs**: Slow carbs like lentils and hummus, fruits, and veggies. No starchy carbs like pasta, rice, or bread, unless it's within 90 minutes post-workout.
- **Fats**: Get at least 5 grams of fish oil as well as olive oil (uncooked), almonds, and peanuts. Avoid saturated fats and trans fats.
• **No Processed Foods:** Foods should come from whole food sources. Salad dressing and twinkies are not whole food sources. Samosas are the enemy.

**Training Regimen**

Before we talk about what to do, let's talk when you do it, and why. I advocate working out one hour prior to breaking the fast because the body is primed and ready for more carbohydrate consumption (from starchy sources). There's debate as to whether working out in a fasted state is good or bad for the protein synthesis (meaning muscle loss), but I consider it irrelevant, one way or another.

I say this because the proposal of working out after *taraweeh* prayers is just a tad impractical – in Chicago, 'Isha prayer starts at 9:30pm approximately, so you're looking at 11pm before you get out of the *masjid*, and 1am in the morning is around when your work, shower, and post-workout meal are completed and consumed. And then you can wake up for *suhoor* at...4am, just 3 hours later. As it turns out, studies also show inadequate sleep is also harmful for muscle-protein synthesis and fat loss. I would guess most people would not handle that beyond 2 – 3 days tops before crashing and burning.

So while working out an hour before the fast concludes is potentially not optimal, it is sustainable, and more than idealized tweaks that are optimizations at best, I prefer that a person who's training build a program that's sustainable. A sustainable, consistent program will any day, hands down beat an optimal, impractical program. This is particularly important for those of you who always get going on a fitness program earlier in the year and are then sidetracked by Ramadan. Having said that, let's get to the specifics:

**Level 1: Absolute Beginner**

Get yourself a pedometer and some Vibram Five Finger shoes (they're funky looking and neat feeling) and work on getting between 6000 – 10,000 steps daily. Climb the stairs, and play with the kids if you have any. Set aside 1 – 2 hours before breaking the fast, and work on making that your "training" hour. If you can build that into your day, and follow what I outlined in Level 1 eating, you can expect to lose a fair amount of weight, provided you're consistent with this on a daily basis.

**Level 2: Intermediate**

If you want to do cardio, keep the pace moderate on the treadmill. For weightlifting, go with heavy weights, and lift them fast. I would say whatever you can lift 4 – 6 times, aiming for a
total of 25 reps on exercises that are compound movements (bench, deadlift, squat, bent over rows, shoulder presses, dips, pull ups, lunges, etc). By lifting heavier weights, you'll help protect your muscle throughout Ramadan. Aim to do this at least 3 times weekly. And make sure you do what the Level 1 guy is doing as well.

**Level 3: Advanced**

You'll do what Level 1 and Level 2 is doing, but in one of your workout sessions, choose weights you can only lift 2 – 3 times, and aim to lift it a total of 15 reps. Or, if you're feeling a little crazy, you can do an all-out athletic training program like P90x (wouldn't recommend it unless you have a death wish).

**Workout Template**

You can choose the exercises you want to do like so:

1. Upper Body Push
2. Upper Body Pull
3. Lower Body Movement
4. Isolation Movement

For example:

1. Weighted Dips
2. Wide Grip Pull ups
3. Hack Squat
4. Bicep Curls

All of this can be found in greater detail in Chad Waterbury's book “Huge in a Hurry” (which I've used and benefited greatly from). By the way, the advice above was for sisters as well. If you don't have equipment, then focus on the moderate-paced cardio and at the very least, Level 1 Eating.

**Conclusion**

I've tried to keep this program as simple and practical as possible for as wide a number of people as possible. However, if you have specific questions you need addressed about the program, the comments section below is a great place to start =) As always check with your doctor first before starting any sort of program.
Ramadan Fragrances: Of Body Odors and Perfumes &
The Person Praying Beside You – Umm Reem

Alhamdullilah Allāh azzawajal has allowed us to witness yet another blessed month of Ramadan. Many of us are also blessed to be able to pray our ṣalāh-ut-taraweeh in the masjid enjoying varieties of beautiful recitations from different imams.

Last year I prayed taraweeh in the Middle East. I was impressed with the way the masājid are taken care of over here. So far I have not found one masjid that was not well-maintained, cleaned and incensed, and even when I make sajdah the carpets smell fresh!

Unfortunately though, the problem arises when the people who attend the masājid do not take care of themselves, their clothes and their body odor. Let me politely explain my dilemma without offending anyone. I have had days when I really wanted to pay attention to the recitation but couldn't do so because the person standing next to me had a stench of sweat or food!

I am not sure how common this problem is amongst the brothers, but I know it exists because my husband, too, has complained at times about the same issue. Obviously, the brothers do not have any excuse for smelling bad, but as for the sisters, some of them think that since they cannot wear perfume outside their homes, they cannot smell good at all!

It is true that sisters have to be extremely careful when they leave their homes and must avoid wearing strong perfumes on themselves lest they be smelled by the men they pass by, but let us be a bit more rational and use our common sense to figure out the difference between having an aroma oozing out and blowing away anyone's mind who passes by and not being malodorous.

There is nothing wrong if a sister wears a light perfume on her body (especially if she is wearing abaya) and knows that she will not be mingling with men so her perfume will not be smelled by other men. We meet different sisters at the masjid, get in close body contact, hug them and especially during ṣalāh we stand shoulder to shoulder, closer than we would ever stand next to men even when intermingling with them. In such circumstances it is especially advisable that a sister takes care of herself and removes any foul smell from herself or from her clothes. If it is needed, perhaps she should carefully apply a very light perfume so she doesn't offend anyone at the masjid. Please see point 4 here: http://islamqa.com/en/ref/102329/smell

Because Muslims Matter.
Here are a few precautions that can be taken before leaving the house for taraweeh:

1) If you are wearing an abaya, please make sure it is does not have a sweat odor or food smell.
2) Please realize that in summer abayas get dirty faster, and it is best to not use the same abayas twice without washing them first.
3) If you are not wearing an abaya, please make sure that your clothes don't smell like sweat or food! Please change your clothes especially if you were wearing them while cooking.
4) Please wear deodorant.
5) If you haven't had a chance to take a shower that day, or if you are not sure if your clothes smell or not, please apply a light perfume or 'itar (fragranced oil) on your body IF you are only going to the women's section of the masjid and will not be encountering men before or after. Again, please refer to the fatwa here: [http://islamqa.com/en/ref/102329/smell](http://islamqa.com/en/ref/102329/smell)

Please be considerate of others, and try not to become a source of distraction during salah. Remember the advice of the Prophet (sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam):

“Whoever eats garlic, onion, then keeps away from our masjid because the angels get offended from what offends the children of Adam.” (Bukhari, Muslim)

When the Prophet (sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam) warned against a foul smell coming from one's mouth so as to not offend anyone attending the masjid, then imagine how much more we have to be careful of any foul smell coming from our clothes or our bodies!

Muslims should really be in a habit of wearing clean clothes and taking a shower every day. If not, then at least whenever they sweat, they should wash themselves off to not only avoid being malodorous but to also feel fresh themselves.

On the contrary, I have also witnessed sisters who wear such strong perfumes that even the masjid's hallways are filled with their aroma! Again, they must be reminded that it is not allowed for women to wear perfume in such a way that it can be smelled by other non-mahram men. And the ruling is the same whether they are wearing the perfume or if their clothes/abayas are perfumed with fragrances like bukhoor or the likes of it.

This is just a friendly reminder to myself first, and then to anyone else who reads it. I hope and I pray that we all can benefit from each other and learn to take advice without being offended.
The Last 10 Nights

Keeping Momentum: Preparing for the Last 10 Nights of Ramadan – Yaser Birjas

In hadîth Abu Hurayrah, râdyAllâhu ’anhu, the Messenger of Allâh, sallallâhu ’alayhi wa sallam, said: “Whoever spends Laylat’l-Qadr in night prayer, out of belief and expecting his reward from Allâh, his previous sins will be forgiven.” [Bukhâri and Muslim]

This is the Night of Power:

“The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.” [al-Qadr 97:3]

In this night:
1. The Qur’ânic is celebrated as it was revealed as guidance to mankind.
2. Good deeds are multiplied by one thousand months worth of worship.
3. The angels will descend to the first heaven in a beautiful procession.
4. Jibrîl, the Archangel and the leader of the angels, will lead the procession.
5. Tranquility will surround people and peace will fill their hearts until the rise of morning.
6. No one really knows the exact bargain and the immense reward Allâh is giving the worshipers during this night.

This night is for sure one of the last ten nights of the month of Ramadan; the exact one was hidden from us to motivate us to do excellence throughout the entire season. It is a very short season but the most powerful of the entire year. Now, shouldn’t you get well prepared for it?

Here are ten tips to help you keep Ramadan momentum running through the last ten nights of Ramadan and beyond. Bismillâh.

1. Keeping momentum means to start one first.

Obviously, if you want to keep a momentum running for the last ten nights of Ramadan, you need to have an existing one first. What have you done so far to gain momentum?

Allâhsubhânahu wa ta’âla says:

“And those who strive in Our (cause),- We will certainly guide them to our Paths:
For verily Allâh is with those who do right.” [al-’Ankabût 29:69]

This âyah explains your role in getting what you ask from Allâh, you start the effort and Allâh will make the path easier. In Ramadan you should have started a path of devotion that would
result in a great momentum to help you get through the last ten nights. If you haven't started yet, then you better begin with it right away. Establish the ‘ibādah that you want to continue during the last ten nights. Start this now.

2. Remember that yesterday ended last night. Period.

What you have done in Ramadan so far has already been registered in your book of deeds. But every day is unique; it's a new day and a new opportunity. Ma'qil ibn Yasar reported the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “There is no day that comes upon the son of Ḥadīth. But every day is unique; it's a new day and a new opportunity. Ma'qil ibn Yasar reported the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “There is no day that comes upon the son of Ādam that does not call: O son of Ādam! I'm a new creation, and will be a witness to your deeds, so make sure you do good, because when I'm gone, I will never return back.” And the night will say the same thing. (Abu Nu'aym)

Therefore, treat every single day as if it was the only day of Ramadan and make sure to fill it with the best acts of goodness.

3. Never be satisfied. You can always do better.

Challenge your growth and keep it continuous. Keep looking ahead and it will motivate you to practice what your goal deserves. If you have done well, then you can do better, and if you have done better, then you can still do that which is best. Allāh subḥānahu wa ta‘āla says:

[Al-Taghābūn 64:9]

In explanation of this āyah Imām al-Qurtubi, raḥimahullāh, reported the hadīth of the Messenger of Allāh, sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam, who said: “No one shall meet Allāh except with a feeling of regret. The wrongdoer for not doing good, and the good for not doing better.”

Never think that you have done enough. The last ten nights are yet to come.
4. Don't make your success a one time hit. Make it a journey and make it a story.

What got you thus far in Ramadan, in regard to your excellent work, won't keep you there if you stop taking action. Don't just live on the success you have already achieved, don't do this forever. Remember that you cannot freeze the moment of success, and if you stop where you are, you will end up falling behind because time will not wait for you. So don't just depend on your success, build on it.

When Ibn 'Abbās, rādYWAllāhu anhu, was asked about the secret of his success and how in such a short time he was able to gather so much knowledge at such a young age he said: “With inquisitive tongue and a comprehensive heart.” Ramadan is a journey of 29 or 30 days; therefore, walk through it steadily until the end.

5. Look for balance, set it up and keep it up.

In the process of achieving excellence in the last ten nights of Ramadan the nafs (your conscious self) gets tired and exhausted. Spiritual recreation is as important as spiritual development. 'Ali, rādYWAllāhu anhu, said, “These hearts get fatigued just like the body. Therefore, rejuvenate by seeking enjoyable acts of wisdom for it.” It is crucial to diversify your program for the last ten nights. Read the Qur’ān, pray qiyām, make lots of du‘ā', engage in dhikr and then read nice books or just exercise. Keep a balance, a good balance.


Allāh subḥānahu wa ta'āla says:

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وَأَنْعِمَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

وثَأْمَنْ إِلَىٰ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُفْلِحَ وَتَأْمَنُّ إِلَىٰ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُفْلِحَ

بَلْ تَأْمَنُّ إِلَىٰ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُفْلِحَ
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“O ye who believe! Fear Allāh, and let every soul look to what (provision) He has sent forth for tomorrow.

Yea, fear Allāh: for Allāh is well-acquainted with (all) that ye do.” [al-Ḥāshr 59:18]

You need to be aware of your investments for the ākhirah. It is important to check your balance every now and then. In Ramadan, revisit your program, check your progress, see what worked for you and what didn't work and then make reasonable adjustments. The last
ten nights of Ramadan are a season that deserves special attention, so make sure to give it the attention it deserves.

7. Make your goals public. Thrive under pressure.

When you plan for the last ten nights of Ramadan; try to share your plans and thoughts with someone you trust. This way you put yourself under pressure and force yourself into achieving what you have already announced. Set a goal for *i'tikāf* or for a longer *qiyām* at night for instance. Your goals are like non-official *nadhr* you vow to take on. You vow to do something to Allāh, so do it. Failing to fulfill a *nadhr* results in a penalty in this *dunya* but failing to fulfill your goals result in a painful feeling of guilt and regret.

Allāh *subhānahu wa ta'āla* says about the people of the ākhirah:

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 أن تقول نفسني فلنحسر على ما فرحت في جنبِ الله وإن كنت لين
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“Lest the soul should (then) say: 'Ah! Woe is me!- In that I neglected (my duty) towards Allāh.’” [al-Zumar 39:56]

8. Focus on benefits and reward. Allāh is Most Generous.

Don't focus too much on the effort exerted to achieve an act of worship; this will cause negative feelings towards it. Instead, focus on the reward you will receive for achieving this goal and fulfilling your vows to Allāh. Stop thinking how difficult it is to stay in the *masjid* for ten nights away from everything; think how rewarding that is for you, by gaining peace in seclusion and witnessing the last ten nights of Ramadan and possibly *Laylat'l-qadr* while engaged in full acts of worship.

When 'Ā'ishah raḍyAllāhu 'anha complained to the Prophet, sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam, about the difficulty of Ḥajj, he replied: “Your reward is as great as your suffering.” That does not mean to expose yourself to difficulties and hardships in order to get greater reward. On the contrary, you should avoid excessive hardships. However, if while doing something things become harder, then you should show patience.

9. Do your deeds with *iḥsān* (excellence). Do not cut corners.

Allāh *subhānahu wa ta'āla* says:
“He Who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is (aḥsanu) best in deed: and He is the Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving.” [al-Mulk 67:2]

This āyah clarifies the meaning of excellence and success. The purpose of creating this life and death is to try people to see who will act in the best way and who will be excellent in his or her deeds.

In hadīth Shaddad ibn Aws, ṭayAllahu 'anhu, the Messenger of Allāh, sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: “Allāh ordained iḥsān (perfection) to be observed in everything.” [Muslim]

When you offer something, offer it with excellence as much as you can. Cutting corners might please you, but it won't please Allāh subḥānahu wa ta'āla. Start an act of worship with excellence; start it right and finish it right.

10. Follow the rule of the snowball. Roll it down a hill, start small and end great with full force.

Little good deeds that are continuous are better than great deeds that are temporary and interrupted. Abu Hurayrah, ṭayAllahu 'anhu, reported the Messenger of Allāh, sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam, said, “The most beloved deeds to Allāh are the most continuous even if they were little.” [Bukhāri]

Start with one thing at a time and then with little of everything and then build on it. Diversify your acts of worship and make the little things grow big over time.

Follow this recipe for the last ten nights of Ramadan and by the end of the month you will have great momentum that will keep you rolling past the month of Ramadan for the rest of the yearinshā'Allāh.

Yaser Birjas
Ramadan 19th, 1432 H.
August 19th, 2011 C.E.
Bismillah

Of these specific Sunnan (plural of sunnah):

1) Staying up at night. A'isha (radi Allahu anha) said: The Prophet (sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam) would pray and sleep during the 20 days [of Ramadan], then during the ten [last nights] he would stay awake and tighten his belt. [Narrated in Ahmad, Authentic] What is understood from staying awake at night is staying up for most of it, as A'isha also said, “I did not know of Allāh's Messenger praying the whole night until morning.” [Muslim]

2) Waking up family. A'isha (radi Allahu anha) reported that Rasul Allāh (sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam) would wake up his family during the last ten nights. [Bukhāri] Sufyan ath-Thawri (rahimahullāh) said: “It is beloved to me that I pray tahajjud and that I strive more [in worship, good deeds etc] and that I wake up my family for prayer if they are able to when the last 10 nights come.”

It is also reported that the Prophet (sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam) would come at night to Ali and Fatimah (radi Allahu anhumā) and say: “Won't you both stand up and pray?” [Bukhāri and Muslim]

It is reported in Al-Muwatta’ that Umar (radi Allahu anhu) would pray during the night then when he reached half of the night he would wake up his family for prayer and say to them, “The prayer, the prayer (as-salāh, as-salāh)” and then recite the āyah, “And enjoin prayer upon your family and be steadfast therein.” (20:132).

3) The Prophet (sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam) would tighten his belt. There are two major opinions on what this statement means among the scholars. The first meaning is that the Prophet (sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam) would strive and work harder and increase in his worship. The other meaning is that the Prophet (sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam) would keep away from his wives (i.e., marital relations), and this is the opinion of many of the predecessors such as Sufyan ath-Thawri. He explained this hadeeth to mean that the Prophet (sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam) would not return to his bed until the month of Ramadan had passed.

4) Bathing between Maghrib and Isha. A'isha (radi Allahu anha) reported that the Prophet (sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam) would bathe between the “two Adhans”. [Translator's note: This hadeeth has been graded weak.] Ibn Jareer (rahimahullāh) said, “They would love to bathe every night of the last ten nights.” It was also reported that Al-Nakha'i (rahimahullāh) would
bathe every night of the last 10 nights. Furthermore, of the Salaf were those who would bathe and wear perfume [only for the men] on the nights they hoped to be Laylatul Qadr such as Abu Ayyub Al-Sakhtayani (rahimahullah) who would bathe and wear two new garments.

We should note that beautification on the outside will not be complete without beautification on the inside. Beautifying oneself from the inside is sought with repentance, returning to Allah and purification from the filth of sins; for beauty of the outside while destroying the inside does not amount to anything.

Furthermore, it is not appropriate for an intimate conversation with a king to take place except with beautifying and purifying the apparent and hidden; specifically with the King of the Kings, the One who knows the secrets and that which is more hidden. He is the One who does not look to your forms but rather looks to your hearts and deeds. So whoever stands before Him, let him beautify his outer with clothing and his inner with Taqwa.

If a person does not dress with the garment of Taqwa, he will become naked even if clothed.

5) I'tikaf (seclusion in the masjid). A'isha (radi Allahu anha) reported that the Messenger of Allah(sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam) would perform i'tikaf in the last ten nights of every Ramadan until he passed away. [Bukhari and Muslim] In Bukhari, it is narrated from Abu Hurayrah (radi Allahu anhu) that the Prophet (sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam) used to stay in I'tikaf for ten days in the month of Ramadan, but stayed for 20 days during the year he died.

The Prophet (sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam), seeking Laylatul Qadr, would perform I'tikaf in these ten nights to disconnect from that which occupied him, clear his mind and seclude himself, remembering and supplicating His Lord.

So the one in I'tikaf has confined himself to the obedience of Allah and His remembrance and cut himself off from all distractions. He has engaged himself wholeheartedly with all that brings him closer to his Lord, with no other aim except to attain the pleasure of Allah. And when the ties of knowledge and love of Allah are strengthened, then is the person bestowed with total isolation with Allah.
Unforgettable Memories of I’tikaaf in al-Masjid al-Haram in Makkah – Yaser Birjas

There is no better place for I'tikaaf during the last ten days of Ramadan than the Haram in Mecca. I truly miss those days. What better place do you need more than the hometown of Islam where the Qur'an was first revealed? The emotions and ecstasy experienced there are indescribable. It is one of those beautiful feelings which you cannot describe with words; you have to live it in order to see it and feel it. Although I have done many I'tikaafs, alḥamdulillāh, in many different masājid in different places in the world, including the masjid of my beloved Rasulullah, salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam in Madīnah, there were none like the experience of al-masjid al-Haram, the Grand masjid in Mecca, may Allāh preserve it and protect it. The ambience there is just amazingly sensational.

As a student of the Islamic University of Madīnah back in the early 1990's, my colleagues and I were privileged to live in the city of Rasulullah salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam for a number of years. We were also privileged to only be four hours away from Mecca. Alḥamdulillāh, consequently we were able to visit Mecca for Umrah frequently, and enjoy the sight of the Ka'bah every chance we could catch outside of school days. I can never forget the sight of the beautiful sacred house, the Ka'bah and the enormous number of people of all colors and all walks of life going in circles around it. It was breathtaking.

One of the privileges we had back then was to take the last ten days of Ramadan off, and with an extra few days for the 'Īd we ended up with almost two weeks off. I remember how we used to start our planning ahead of time, because we knew that we would be leaving Madīnah to go to Mecca. We used to spend most of the Ramadan hours, days and nights in the masjid of Rasulullah salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam. Just thinking of who used to walk around in this same area 1400 years ago, and who used to spend his time in this place was electrifying.

When the last day of school was over, we rushed straight to Mecca for Umrah in order to make sure that we entered the Haram and our I'tikaaf before sunset. If you want your I'tikaaf of the last ten days of Ramadan to be counted for you, then you should be in the masjid right before the first night of the last ten nights start. That means just before sunset on the 20th day of Ramadan.

Regulations in the Haram in Mecca prohibit keeping any kind of luggage, suitcases, clothes or anything of the sort a traveler might need during his stay in the masjid for I'tikaaf. You have
to keep everything outside. This prohibition put a limit on what we could really carry with us for the I'tikaaf. So we carried just two or three thoub, the traditional Arab garb, a shimagh or head cover which we also used as an eye cover so that we could get the feeling of dark night, one casual short sleeved thoub for the daily activities which also served as our pajamas, few number of underwear and t-shirts, general hygiene stuff and of course books to read. In the I'tikaaf in Mecca, you need to forget about the luxury of pillows and blankets, let alone a mattress or bed. You use the carpet as your bed and the ceiling as your cover. Well, we still used the stuff we had with us, we would pile them up to make a pillow, and then use the Ihram, the two white sheets, one for a mattress (or a mat to be precise) and one for a blanket.

With no lockers anywhere to keep your belongings safe and with millions of people, commuters and travelers from all over the world who come to visit for Umrah, keeping our stuff outside in the open was impossible for us, as there would be no way to keep all of your things for the duration of the I'tikaaf without losing them. So we had to smuggle them in, yes, smuggle them.

We would first go back to the Haram right after we are done with our Umrah, as early as possible, to look around for a prime location. The Haram during the I'tikaaf season would be divided, unofficially of course, into small lots the size of a twin mattress each, just enough for you to lay down and get some sleep. A prime location meant a place in the corner far away from the traffic. Getting close to the balcony so you could overlook the beautiful sight of the Ka'bah and the Tawaf court, was nice in the beginning, but then as people start jumping all over you to enjoy watching the sight themselves, the location was no longer so prime.

If you couldn't get a corner location, which was almost impossible - how many corners are there in a masjid anyways - then you would look for the wall. Taking a wall site is good because it traps your items by the wall so they won't go anywhere, and it also limits the traffic in that area. The third in the line of favorite locations was the side of one of the main and humongous pillars of the masjid. Although you would be surrounded by others all around you, having one side of the cubic shaped pillars gives you the base of one side all for you. If you were unable to get any of these spots then you risk ending up in the middle of the crowd, and that was never a good place to be during a long I'tikaaf.

It was like an 'urf, or common law, among the dwellers of the Haram, that once you settle and unload your stuff in one location it becomes yours until the end of the I'tikaaf, unless you abandon it and take your things out of that location. Everybody respected that. Well, almost. Some visitors, as they looked for a place to get their nap, acted like “Goldilocks and the Three Bears.” They just didn't care and would go ahead and violate the rule. They would find
themselves a comfy place that did not belong to them and go to sleep. It was not that big of a deal to us but overall, people still honored the rule and respected the privacy of others. One more thing about prime locations at the Haram is that it's better to stay on the first floor than the ground floor where most of the heavy traffic exists. You should also stay away from the escalators and the stairways which feed the area with more visitors. And last but not least, stay in a location where you can easily have an access to the bathrooms outside, believe me its one of the most important criteria of your search. It's not easy to remember your location when the Haram looks so symmetrical and sometimes confusing, but after getting lost a few times, you'll get there. GPS won't work there either, therefore you have to rely on your photographic memory, if you have one of course.

Now, how did we get our stuff in? Well, we used to take turns in getting our things through the doors. One would be outside keeping all our stuff with him, another would stay at the location to make sure it is reserved and then the third would be making trips going back and forth to get his things carried in. We would stuff the small things in our pockets, clothes under the books and look for a diversion by going through the most crowded doors. And even if you get caught with your clothes hidden between the books, you could still look for another gate and get through. The funny part was carrying the thobɔs in. Some of us used to put them on one on top of another and then take them off as we entered the Haram.

Of course, we do understand why the authorities didn't allow clothes and luggage to be brought into the maṣjid because if this was allowed people would abuse the system. Nevertheless, during the last ten days of Ramadan there should be some tolerance because this is temporary and for I'tikaaf purposes only. These items are very important to help those who are in I'tikaaf to stay in good health and good shape. Before we left our spot, we would make sure to fold up our stuff and squeeze them towards the wall so that they would not get messed up while people were praying Taraweeh.

After we had taken care of our accommodations, we began searching around to locate two things. First, where the scholars would be giving their daily and evening classes, and second, where the food spreads were over which some scholars and students of knowledge, especially coming from other countries, would be breaking their fast. We later learned that most of these food spreads were located on the top level of the Haram facing the gutter of the Ka'bah known as “al-Mizaab.” Every time you go there, you will be blessed with one or two or even more scholars coming from different places around the world. On these food spreads, I had the opportunity to meet scholars from Egypt, ash-Sham, India, N. Africa and other areas as well.
On the sunset of the first night of the I'tikaaf, we would already be on the top level asking around to find out who was coming and where they would be breaking their fast. If we received the news about some scholars coming over, we would make sure the others got to know about it as well.

Iftar is usually made of the magnificent, lightly roasted Arabic coffee cooked with cardamom and some other flavors, served with fresh “rutab,” the moist and early stage of the dates. Dates come in different shapes and tastes and it would be a blessing if you were served some of the most expensive Qaseemi dates that grows in the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, such as sukkari, maktoomi and khalas. With that comes yogurt and freshly baked bread. Now, Bismillah.

After Maghrib prayer, we go back to congregate around the Shuyūkh and scholars, to listen, learn, take notes and drink a fresh cup of tea made with 'hasawi' mint. That tea used to give the session a whole different flavor, literally.

Later on, we would start getting ready for Isha prayer and Taraweeh afterwards. The prayer in the Tawaf court would have been the best place to stand in ṣalāh. However, since we loved to attend the sessions of Sh. al-Uthaymeen rahimahullah after Taraweeh, we had to stay on the top floor and pray right next to his official seat. If you wanted to benefit from the Ilm of the sheikh, you would need to sit as close to him as possible. Thousands attended his sessions and coming after ṣalāh to look for a space meant that you would be sitting at least a hundred yards away from him. The place would be crowded with waves of people. I have seen some very dedicated students who would preserve their spot from ‘aṣr time, and I really admire them for their devotion to the knowledge.

In the early years, the sheikh used to start right after Taraweeh and finish when they start the Tahajjud at night, that was more than four hours. SubhanaAllah, I have no idea how he was able to keep his energy level during this time for the entire ten nights. In the later years, the sessions where cut short and lasted until one hour before the Tahajjud, and even then, it was still a very long session.

The sheikh used to start by commenting on some of the ṣuyūt recited in ṣalāh at-Taraweeh that night for about 20-25 minutes, and then the session would be opened to Q&A. SubhanaAllah, the amount of Ilm one was exposed to in such a short time was amazing. Even today, I still have some of the original notes that I’d taken over the years from these sessions.
When we finished the session, we would go out to get some food for our main Iftar meal. You know the custom there was to delay the main course until after Taraweeh, which I love and enjoy. The initial Iftar was nutritious, easy and not overwhelming so that you can survive during ṣalāh at-Taraweeh, and once you've finished your ṣalāh, you get to eat your main meal.

Right after that, we used to start our own personal night activities which included reading and reviewing the Qur'an, praying more qiyam, reading books using this time for devotion and meditation and the best of all doing Tawaf, as many times as we were able, around the Ka'bah. There was no way you would get bored at the Haram because every second the scene changes and the experience is different.

We stayed up during the night waiting for ṣalāh at-Tahajjud where eight more rak'as would be performed at a slower pace than the Taraweeh, until it was finished about an hour or so before Fajr time. After that, we would go to eat our modest suhoor which we had purchased earlier when we had our Iftaar. Then we prepared ourselves for Fajr prayer.

Right after Fajr, Sheikh al-Uthaymeen rahimahullah used to have another session on the ground level for almost two hours. I sometimes felt extremely tired and very sleepy, but subhanaAllah, seeing the energy of the sheikh, who was at my grandfather's age, doing what he was doing would empower me again to stay until the end of the session.

Thereafter, we used to get back to our hiding places, our sleeping spots, and drop down like dead bodies. We stayed asleep for the rest of the morning until Dhuhr time when we awoke for ṣalāh. We stayed up for a while and then went back to sleep taking a power nap so that we could stay up all night again. After all, there wouldn't be much going on during that time, anyway. Even the halaqat and sessions of knowledge were scarce and didn't start until after 'asr. Sometimes we seized the opportunity to make a relatively easier Tawaf before we head to bed.

Once 'asr time starts, our day officially starts with it. We joined the few halaqat scattered around and then it would be time to get ready for Maghrib. Sometimes, we did Tawaf before we went to the top level and other times, we just went into seclusion for reading and reviewing the Qur'an. As the time of iftar approaches, our preparation for the night increased. Once the adhān for Maghrib is announced, a new evening begins.

The program continues the same for the rest of the month except for some occasional changes based on rising opportunities such as receiving guests or family and sometimes meeting new people and old friends. Subhana'Allāh, even though the space in the Haram is so
huge, and the number of people is so great, but it is still a small world. You always meet some
old acquaintance, as if they fell from the sky. One year, I even met my own mother who
decided at the last minute to come for Umrah with my father! We didn't have cell phones
back then and there was no way to send me a message about their arrival. It was a friend of
mine who met my father and sent me to him.

The entire season is special, but two nights were the most special nights in the entire month
of Ramadan: the night of the 27th and the 29th. At least that's how people behaved on these
two nights. The 27th is regarded as Laylatul Qadr, and the 29th is the night of Khatmul
Qur'an, the completion of the recitation of the Qur'an. I remember when Sheikh as-Sudays
used to pray the witr after finishing the Taraweeh and then he would pray the witr again after
the Tahajjud, but then it was announced that the witr in the last ten nights would be
performed only once after Tahajjud. And even this, was later changed to only after Taraweeh.
Another year, the sheikh did not pray the Tahajjud and it was left for other Shuyūkh to lead
but without praying witr at the end.

One of the most dramatic changes that I witnessed during those years of I'tikaaf was moving
the Khatmul Qur'an to the night of the 27th. The imām of al-Haram, announced using the
loud speakers, which was unusual, that in order to receive the blessings of that night in
particular they wanted to join the Khatmul Qur'an with what is regarded as Laylatul
Qadr. Another reason for this change, was in order to help people, and the visitors in
particular, to attend the completion of the Qur'an and then get a chance to travel back home
and attend 'Īd day with their families.

This change created a very dangerous and hazardous situation in the Haram. After the
change was announced, people came from all over the country and from the surrounding
countries as well, just to witness that night. It was within driving distance for the most of
them. The Haram, as huge as it appears, was overpopulated to the extent where people
started praying on top of the walls on the top level exposing themselves to an extremely
perilous situation. People filled every space you can think of and spaces you cannot even
think of. The escalators crashed and the stairways were closed because people were trying to
get to the upper levels as the gates to the lower levels were closed. The authorities tried to
keep people out but visitors would push their way through. It was a very dangerous situation.
In addition to this, once the imām finished, people were trying to leave as early as possible
and the situation almost caused stampedes all over the area of the Haram. The Imams of the
Haram, realizing the danger, announced the following night that this combining of events
would not happen again next year and that the Khatmul Qur'an would be restored back to
the night of the 29th.
That year, when they moved the Khatmul Qur'an to the night of the 27th, the following two or three nights left of the month of Ramadan were the most peaceful nights of the month. Most of the visitors left and the Haram became almost empty. Overall, it was a one-of-a-kind experience that I was able to attend and witness.

I still remember one night when I had to leave quickly with a guest, a friend who was visiting with his mother for Umrah, and we had to go after Maghrib to get ourselves and his mother some food, it was impossible. People were like in a disaster zone, they were all trying to buy food. We didn't know why it was so different that night but it appeared that they were getting ready for their journey after the ṣalāh. We couldn't get anything, neither for his mother nor for ourselves, and when we tried to get back to the Haram the guards were already closing the doors to the upper levels and the escalators were all closed. I had to take him to some unknown paths, at least unknown to the common visitors, and then find our way up. To our surprise, there was no space at all. We had to wait until the Iqama was called and struggle to squeeze ourselves into the line even if we were standing somewhat sideways. It was an amazing and unforgettable night, which not too many people have had the good fortune to experience.

The blessings of the I'tikaaf are so many, and some of the lessons imām Ibnul Qayyim,rahimahullah, suggested we learn from this experience are:

1. It is a form of 'Khalwa' that is living in seclusion – to a certain extent – where you can focus on your nafs and personal Ibadah and worship.
2. It is a chance to connect with the Divine subḥānahu wa ta'āla because your focus is solely on pleasing Him and Him alone.
3. It is a spiritual rehab and escape from the pressure of this life. You live a stress-free life for few days only for the sake of Allāh.
4. You learn to limit your interaction with people and increase your interaction with your own self. It is like a moment of 'muhasaba' were you review your 'amal, or work, and check and balance your book of deeds.
5. It is a chance to explore your potential and an opportunity to see how much you can really bear of the different acts of Ibadah you expose yourself to in such a very short time.

The last part of this experience for us was witnessing the 'Īd day. During the last night of Ramadan, everyone is in a high level of excitement in anticipation for the 'Īd announcement. If the next day was still Ramadan, then alhamdulillāh, we would get to pray one more night of Taraweeh and Tahajjud. If 'Īd was the next day, then there would be an important thing to do before anything else. You had to run to your sleeping space and pick everything up with you,
otherwise it would be swept out with everything on the floor. You see, during the last ten nights of Ramadan, other than the vacuum cleaners, the janitorial work would stop temporarily until the night of 'Īd. So right after Isha, in preparation for the 'Īd ṣalāh, the workers would start to take everything off the floor. Literally, everything. They sweep and wash and mop the floor of the entire Grand masjid, and then they lay down new carpet. Whatever is left down there will be piled up in one corner and you would be blessed if you can find anything of your own belongings.

SubhanaAllah, that night was one of the most depressing nights for us. After living for ten nights in the Haram, when it was full with people and full with duroos and activities, suddenly the hustle and bustle is gone and you are back to the reality of life. The place would be empty, absolutely empty. A temporary feeling of void would fill your heart and you would suddenly break into tears. At the end, you realize that you're once again back on your own. Once Salatul 'Īd is performed in the majestic ambience and atmosphere of the Grand masjid in Mecca, we headed straight to the bus station. We took a bus ride back to Madīnah and returned with some unforgettable memories of I'tikaaf.

Yaser Birjas
Ramadan 26, 1431 H.
September 5, 2010
The Night of Power (Laylat’l-Qadr): Step by Step Guide – Abdullah Hasan

As Muslims we are blessed with countless blessings from Allāh. Among them is that He has prescribed the fasting during the month of Ramadan and has favored us over any other faith group in the past by multiplying our deeds especially in this blessed month. Another immeasurable blessing which Allāh has favored us with is the night of power. Worshiping in this night sincerely and expecting the reward from Allāh carries great reward for the servants. In an authentic narration from the Prophet, we read: “Whosoever worshiped on laylat’l-qadr, with faith and with a sincere intention, all of his previous sins are forgiven.” [i]

This night is special for the Ummah of the Prophet Muḥammad. Worshiping Allāh in it is equivalent to worshiping Him for 1000 months.

I do not wish to delve into the views and opinions of the scholars regarding the timing and date of this powerful and blessed night. There are a plethora of articles and books on these topics. The reader may wish to read the writings of imām Ibn Rajab al Hanbali in his much celebrated book Lataif al Ma'arif in the chapter of Ramadan.

I wish to focus on how we can prepare ourselves to reap the rewards of this night and hopefully be granted the forgiveness of our Lord. Below is a step by step guide to achieving success during laylat’l-qadr inspired by the writings of imām Ibn Rajab and others:

1. **Start preparing for it at Fajr.** After Fajr ṣalāh, ensure you recite the morning adhkar (remembrance), especially:

   لا إلّا إلّه إلّا إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّه إلّأ...
The Prophet said whoever recites it 100 times in the morning and evening, 100 good deeds will be recorded for him and 100 evil deeds will be erased from his tab, and he will be protected from the Shaytan. An important note here is that he will be free from the whisperings of the Shaytan to prepare for the Night of Power.

2. **Treat Iftar to a fasting person, either by inviting him to your house, or by buying the food for him and sending it to him.** The Prophet said that whoever gives food to break another person's fast, he will receive the same reward as the person without his reward being diminished.

3. **When the day breaks, make as much du‘ā’ as possible that Allāh helps you and makes it easy for you to worship Him during this night.**

4. **If you haven't paid your Zakat money, pay it this night as the rewards will be magnified.** If you have, then prepare some sadaqah (charity) to give in the way of Allāh. Remember charity burns our sins as fire burns wood.

5. **During the course of the day, try and avoid people as much as possible (except those who need your support).** This way you will not be harmed and will not be in a position to harm anyone, thus entering the night with a clean heart and mind.

   Note: this also applies to the various social networks such as Facebook, Twitter etc. You do not need to tell the whole world you're going to the Mosque at Tahajjud!

6. **Throughout the daytime make sure you perform the obligatory duties such as praying on time with the additional Sunnah and optional prayers.** Repeat the phrases of adhān after the muadhin and make the necessary supplications.[ii]

7. **When you break your fast, make sure you're mindful that Allāh may not accept your fasting, so you should yearn for and anticipate His mercy and reward.** Supplicate with the following:

   اللهم اعني و وقفي لقيامي ليلة القدر

   'Allahumma 'ainni wa waffiqni li qiyami Laylatul qadr'
   O Allāh help me and facilitate for me to worship You in this Night'.

Because Muslims Matter.
8. Constantly make the chosen du‘ā’ for this night:

اللهم إنك عفو تحب العفو فاعف عنني

"Allahumma innaka 'afuwun tuhibbul 'afwa fa'fu 'anni"
O Allāh you the Most Forgiving, and You love to forgive, so forgive me"[iii]

9. If you have parents, make sure you are dutiful towards them. Break Iftar with them and fulfill all their needs.

10. If you are not in good terms with a family member, try and resolve it before the night starts.

11. If you can, have a bath and perform wuḍū’ like the Prophet.

12. Put on clean clothes and put nice perfume on before going to the Mosque.

13. When you enter the Mosque perform all the etiquette of the Mosque. Try not to speak to people too much, just focus all your energy to be alone with Allāh.

14. Pray the prayers with khushu (humility) and try to cry. If tears do not come out, try and make them come (I DON’T mean you should cut onions in the Mosques 😊)

15. When you return home, make sure you are still doing the dhikr of Allāh.

16. When you arrive at your house, eat and make du‘ā’, make wuḍū’ and take some rest (sleep) if you need to. Your sleep will be counted as ibadah.

17. Wake up in due time and pray Tahajjud (many Mosques pray Tahajjud in a Jama'ah), eat and then pray fajr. After fajr, read the Qur'an, make constant du‘ā’ and plead to Allāh to forgive you. Do that and the morning dhikr until sunrise, all the while being mindful of the presence of the angels.

Remember this is the night in which Allāh decrees your rizq (provisions) for the coming year, so implore Allāh; cry your heart out as they say so that He may give you what you desire. Don't think what you're asking for is too much for Allāh, nothing you ask will decrease His
dominion. You want money ask Him, you want a wife/husband ask Him, you want a job ask Him, you want children ask Him, you want peace of heart ask Him, anything you desire ask. Remember that you must focus and concentrate when you pray and make du‘ā’.

18. When you make du‘ā’, remember that there is certain etiquette you have to follow:
   a) Praise Allāh first,
   b) then send salutations upon the Prophet,
   c) then make du‘ā’ for your yourself,
   d) then make du‘ā’ for your family and the rest of the Ummah.

Try and follow this order as much as you can.

19. Remember when you supplicate you should have certainty and expect the best from Allāh. Pray with humility and fear in front of Allāh. Acknowledge your mistakes and shortcomings and implore and beseech Him alone to forgive you. Also supplicate to Allāh quietly – there is no need to raise one's voice.

20. And finally, please do not forget to make du‘ā’ for this poor servant who is in need of your prayers.[iv]

Important note for sisters:
Many sisters who are on the monthly menses ask what they can do during this night. They feel left out from the blessings of this night.

Although she is not allowed to perform the prayers and recite the Qur'an by touching it. The scholars have stated that she may perform as much du‘ā’ as possible, remembering and praising Allāh. They also state that she is allowed to recite the Qur'an from her memory. And finally if her intention and ardent desire is to worship her Lord in this night but due to the valid excuse in the Shari'ah she is not able to perform the normal prayers; she should be certain that Allāh will reward her fully according to her sincerity and intention.

Allāh knows best.

[i] Bukhāri and Muslim
[iii] Please watch a short video clip explaining briefly the meaning of this du‘ā’: http://youtu.be/QU1jDhW64ak
[iv] Please refer to Ibn Rajab's Lataif al Ma'arif for discussion on the virtues and some actions of this night.
‘Eid

Inside the Mind of a First Time ‘Eid Khateeb – Omar Usman

Somehow, this year I found myself in the position of leading ‘Īd prayer for the first time in my life. Actually, 'somehow' is a vague description. A more accurate description would be, Due to the inability of even having city-wide unity on ‘Īd, and losing our backup imām to the 'other day' with the 'other half' of the city, I was forced at the last minute to prepare myself to lead one of the ‘Īd prayers in our masjid.

The good news is, since our masjid was doing it on Wednesday, I at least had the 30th of Ramadan to prepare. Also, alḥamdulillāh, since we do not follow calculations, I had taken 2 days off work, so that also worked to my advantage (and some people call that a hardship?). Imagine, preparing yourself for a nice ‘Īd with the family. Relaxing on the last couple of nights, catching up on random things at the end of Ramadan. Then imagine, being told you have to not only attend ‘Īd prayer at a different time you had made plans for, but that you had to now lead it. It is unbelievable how many questions and concerns started swirling in my head at that moment.

Me?? Seriously? Can't we find someone else to do it?

How do you even pray Salatul-‘Īd again?? How many takbeers? How do you keep count?
What should the khutbah be on?

Will this create fitnah in the community, especially for our desi uncles who don't like to see “kids” involved in regular affairs, much less leading ‘Īd prayer of all prayers?

I even remembered a story of one shaykh (I think I heard it at Texas da’wah) telling us the story of how the first time he gave khutbah, he lost his ṭuḍū. For anyone that didn't understand that, think of a common involuntary bodily reaction that occurs when someone suddenly gets super-nervous. As if I didn't have enough to worry about already, this story all of a sudden comes to me?

Once I settled down though, I reassessed the situation. I took quick stock of my friends and realized outside of “imām” types, I don't know anyone who has ever led ‘Īd prayer. I realized that Allāh (swt) has presented me with this opportunity for some specific reason. Even
though it was a smaller ṣalāh, at a local masjid, it was still a significant opportunity, and an important experience that could inshā'Allāh really help me in my Islamic development. What follows below is some of the thought process that went into the preparation, and how it turned out.

The Fiqh of 'Īd

This subject wasn't completely new to me. I have read small booklets here and there on the Fiqh of 'Īd and Muslim holidays. But the one who reads for information is not like the one who reads to immediately implement. How many people know details of the fiqh of Hajj until they’re actually about to go on Hajj? Exactly.

I did what any enterprising student of knowledge would do in my situation. I googled it. I'm not gonna lie and say I embarked on some kind of academic research of the issue, or that I even went to my bookshelf to revisit those books I read many years ago. I simply Googled it and checked Islam-QA.com. I should add a note here, that I did not do this to actually teach myself how to do the ṣalāh, but rather to familiarize myself with the common issues that arise in relation to the Fiqh of ʿĪd ṣalāh, and perhaps find what (if any) 'controversial' points there are. I found a few, but I realized they were 'controversial' only because the sources I studied from some years ago actually represented only a small minority view on some issues, although they painted as if that was the only opinion and everyone else was wrong (but that's a different story).

I sat down with our imām and brought up the issues I had questions on – for example how many takbeerat to say in each rak'ah. Timing did not dictate any allowance for academic research on the issue, or even more than a cursory glance. I personally felt from my minimal (Islam-QA) research that the stronger opinion was 7 takbeers in the first, and 5 in the second. The community I am in though, has a long-standing precedent of praying ʿĪd according to the Hanafi style (3 takbeers in each rak'ah). Taking into account the history and orientation of our community, in addition to keeping the entire event as “drama-free” as possible [it is ʿĪd after all!], I also recalled an advice of Shaykh ʿalāh al-Sawi (and he's not the first to say it obviously): The madhab of the layman is the madhab of his imām. So in this particular situation, I found myself to very much be a layman in all senses of the word regarding Salatul-ʿĪd. 3 takbeers it is, though I don't think I ever imagined myself making absoloute taqleed of the Hanafi madhab :)

Settling that stuff was the easy part. The hard part was actually sitting down with the imām and going through the procedure, and learning how to explain it to the people.
One of the most important things to keep in mind is that at 'Īd time, you're not dealing with a regular crowd, or even a once a week crowd like at Jumu'ah – you are dealing with a lot of the once a year crowd. That changes everything.

I had to remember to tell people that there is no adhān and iqamah. Explain the takbeers. That there is in fact a khutbah, where I will be speaking, following the ṣalāh. That they are to be quiet during the khutbah. That there are 2 khutbahs, so don't start hugging everyone as soon as I sit down. My notes for this were actually longer than the notes I made for my actual khutbah (says something about our condition as an ummah). You can't take anything for granted at this point, every minute instruction must be laid out.

The Khutbah

What to talk about? I received many suggestions on what to talk about. I tried to find 'Īdkhutbahs given by others (such as Shaykh Google) for inspiration. I received suggestions to talk about almost everything. Some brothers gave me suggestions that even for a Jumu'ah khutbah would require at least 1-2 weeks worth of research and preparation to do properly. I even found a couple of fire and brimstone type 'Īd khutbahs. Ok well, that's an exaggeration, but they weren't exactly the “positive” and “uplifting” type of khutbahs you would expect for such an occasion. One brother even told me that one time Siraj Wahaj spoke about the sad state of our ummah that we pray 'Īd and miss fajr, and that he said if you didn't pray fajr he was going to turn around and to make your qadha! I couldn't stop laughing at that one. I'm not sure that I know anyone who can pull that off other than him though.

Alḥamdulillāh though, my wife gave me the topic idea I ended up using (hey, we do listen sometimes): How to make this the best 'Īd for your children. This made the khutbah easy, especially since I have given a more formal khutbah on youth a couple of times before. The keys with the khutbah were for it to be positive, and more importantly, short. This process though, did make me realize why “imams talk so much” at this time. It is the only opportunity to address a crowd of this magnitude, and a crowd that you would otherwise never reach. A jum'uah crowd is fairly static, but the 'Īd crowd – you feel not only the desire to inspire and motivate them, but you feel a responsibility to make up for a whole year's worth of da'wah in one speech. I think that's why we find so many 'Īd khutbahs that are trying to make us better Muslims, end hunger, create world peace, abolish Israel, and save the whales all in 30 minutes.

What to Wear?
This is not something I took lightly, and not just because of my unhealthy interest in Men's fashion. Sh. Yaser Birjas dedicated a part of his Ilm Summit session on Jumu'ah to this issue, and even the imām asked me about it as we were finalizing plans for me to lead. Should I cement my status as the community weirdo and wear a suit? Maybe next time, not at my firstṣalāh though. Should I wear a shalwar kameez/kurta like my mom prefers, and alienate the Arab crowd? Should I wear a thobe and just go traditional? If I wear a thobe, should I wear jeans under it (my personal preference), or pants, or the actual white thobe pants which are useless since they have no pockets? Also what color thobe? If I'm the imām, I can't just walk in with a plain old thobe can I? Do I wear a kufi so that people don't write me off as some kind of openly 'disobedient' imām, even though I can't find a kufi that looks normal on my big head and I never wear one anyways? Should I wear a sportcoat or blazer over my thobe (my wife vetoed that one before I even finished suggesting it)?

I finally decided to wear the plain white thobe, with the white thobe pants, and a black/white ghutrah (shimagh) on my shoulders. I should add though, that even socks came into play, and I had to make sure not to wear anything that had too much color or 'untraditional' lest I give someone the 'wrong' impression.

'Īd Day

My family was more concerned about me waking up on time then they were about me leading the prayers since I have a reputation for, well, never waking up on time for pretty much anything. True to form, I woke up with barely enough time to pray fajr and then start getting ready, beginning the day in rush mode. I had no appetite whatsoever, partially due to being used to fasting, and partially due to stress. I had a sip of water for no other reason then the fact that it was sunnah to have something before ṣalāh to show you aren't fasting. After ṣalāh though, I made up for it with almost a half-dozen Krispy Kreme dounts.

As ṣalāh time approached (and I started on the dot on the announced time alḥamdulillāh, no delays), I emerged from my hiding spot (aka mingling near the shoe-rack and entrance) and went to the front, taking on inquisitive and surprised stares as I grabbed the microphone. Many people had this complete look of devastation on their faces, since the expected imām was not there, and now some guy who definitely shouldn't be at the microphone at this moment in time is about to take the mic. I'd like to say I took the mic and then confidently lead ṣalāh, and we all lived happily ever after. The reality is, the second I took the microphone I started stumbling over my words trying to explain the procedure of ʿĪd ṣalāh. I ignored my notes and tried to do it from memory until I got stuck, had to look at my paper to find where I was and continue. Finally, I got everyone lined up, and turned around to start ṣalāh when I realized I forgot to turn on my recorder (I record every khutbah
or anything I do). I’m used to doing that for Jumu’ah while I’m sitting on the minbar and adhān is being called, but I completely forgot to plan for this small tactical detail. I’m not sure what came over me, but I suddenly said into the mic, “I will wait an extra minute for the women to line up” and quickly turned on my recorder and put it next to me.

With that out of the way, I realized I now had to lead šalāh. All I could think about was the extra takbeers. Don't forget to do them. No matter what, don't lose count (alḥamdulillāh for the Hanafi way, I think I would have seriously 'lost my wuḍū’ trying to count 7 and 5). I did the extra takbeers, and started reciting. Normally, you focus on what you're reading and not messing up. Not this time. My recitation was flowing straight out of subconscious memory – kind of like how you drive home without thinking about where you're actually going or paying attention to where to turn. The only thing on my mind? Praying like it’s my last, reflecting on the meanings of what I'm reciting, imagining the akhirah? I wish. All I could think about was “don't forget the extra takbeers in the second rakah” over and over and over again in my head.

I made tasleem, and I realized I was now at a point where I didn't know what to do. Am I supposed to pause for a moment? Do I make adkhaar like after šalāh? Do I just immediately get up and start the khutbah? It was a minor detail we forgot to cover while preparing. I just got up and climbed the minbar and started talking. It must be the shortest khutbah I ever gave in my life. I am not even sure if it hit a full 15 minutes total, much closer to 10.

Once I finished the khutbah, I got down, thinking I was prepared for the hugathon. I had even been warned that I would face an onslaught. I figured though, that I would be immune to it. No one is used to seeing me give the ‘Īd khutbah. I’m not even the one who led taraweeh.

What ensued though totally took me off guard. Old men, young guys, and even little kids led by their parents had all formed roughly 3 lines around me in all directions, cornering me at the minbar. I was not moving until I hugged at least a couple of hundred people, and not only that, but when you factor in the triple hugging for each person, you are really stuck. Now normally at ‘Īd, you are hugging people you already know, or are familiar with. You do hug a few strangers, sure, but not like this. You can usually figure out some kind of hugging protocol, but not only was I hugging a majority of total strangers, they all had different protocols. Sometimes I was going to shake a hand only to be grabbed and my hand ends up in someone’s stomach (butalḥamdulillāh, with the kind of iftars we eat, the blow was cushioned significantly). I’d start looking to one person, only to be grabbed by another. I got so numb to it after a few minutes that I did not even realize when my own dad was hugging me until I was in phase 2 of the triple hug!
All in all, it ended well alḥamdulillāh. There were no complaints, the khutbah was well received. I wasn't sure what to expect afterwards. Alḥamdulillāh though, it ended normally. Once it was done, I just relaxed knowing it was done, and I slept a little better that night knowing that I could, in fact, properly count to 3 in pressure situations.
Eid Greetings: Hugathon or Kissathon – Yaser Birjas

During the 'Īd day, we get hugged and kissed more in an hour than others would in an entire lifetime. 'Īd day becomes a hug-athon day, and in some cultures, it's even a kiss-athon. You get hugs and kisses (on the cheek of course) from people whom you know and do not know. You get it from every Tom, Dick and Harry, or let me say from every Ahmad, Abdullah and FathaAllah.

Hugs and kisses, depending on the culture, come in different forms and formats. In some cultures, you hug three times by holding the person's upper arms while your chin almost relaxing on one of the shoulders and then swing your shoulders right, left and then right again each time faces come across as you switch from one side to the other. Sometimes this hug comes with a kiss on the shoulder. Some cultures add a nice innocent squeeze while folding the arms around the other persons' back. Sometimes the squeeze can be breathtaking, literally. In other cultures, one hug on one side is enough followed by a nice warm double hand shaking.

The Sudanese hug is fun – to save some time they just pat you on the opposite shoulder and then shake hands with you. With this kind of hug comes a long standing of “how are you, how's the family, are you ok, are you fine?” and on and on of the same line of greetings until someone gives up first. I love the way they do it. Many African hugs look similar to that one except that they pat and give a quick and light embrace, or a front shoulder to shoulder push.

Unlike men, women hug each other passionately. They even do the kissing part more than men do. They are more social, and for them it is a reflection of joy and happiness more than just a formal greeting. The kissing part for many of people, especially young ones, who grew up in the west, to only be polite I say, does not make any sense. Unfortunately, the cultural pressure nowadays made it even look awkward to watch men kissing each other on the cheek, let alone to kiss someone who is young, including a close family member. With high rates of inappropriate conduct around the world, including in Muslim societies, we do not blame people if they shrug their shoulders when they see it, or are approached with something like that. Here is a hint, if the person is not from the culture of kissing, then don't try it.

Some other cultures, such as in the southern belt of the Arabian Peninsula, they have a very different way of greeting. A nose bumping and sometimes nose kissing substitutes for the cheek kissing thing. You don't like it? You don't have to do it, you can just kiss the shoulder,
it will do the job. Kissing the forehead or the hand is very common with the elders as a sign of respect; you should try it especially with your parents and grandparents. They will love it. In the Gulf culture, with the shaking of hands comes the custom of sticking cheek to cheek and the kissing will be in the air. Sometimes you stick the right cheeks first for once and then you move to the left cheek with three to four quick bumps, each comes with a kiss in the air but with a longer intermission before the last bump and then hands released.

Sticking cheeks together with a nice squeeze is common amongst women. They like to hold the forearms as they kiss, or they embrace with one shoulder by placing their arm over one shoulder from above. Much of the air kissing happens there with women as well, probably to avoid ruining their makeup art, or to avoid smearing others with their multi-colored lipsticks. Some aunties love the multiple super fast kisses on one cheek. Ask the younger ones, they hate it. For whatever reason it is done, they just express their emotions and feelings.

The stronger the squeeze, the stronger the relation. Just don't depend on that to gauge your meter of sensitivity with people. I'm sure after half an hour of cheek sticking and squeezing and after long time of constant smiling you get cheek muscle fatigue. You won't be able to keep up with smiling nor squeezing.

There are so many different forms of hugging and kissing during the 'Īd. If you attend the 'Īd day, you will observe tens of different patterns. I know they start genuine and passionate but after half an hour or so of hugging and kissing, they become mechanical, and you can tell people are running out or energy.

For someone who wears glasses, like me, hugging and kissing is a nightmare. They keep bumping into other people's noses, faces, head covers, hijabs and sometimes catch some of their hair. And talk about hugging or kissing someone else who is wearing glasses too, now that is a scene. Therefore, before the hug-athon starts I take my glasses off and keep them in my pocket, otherwise I will have to spend the rest of the day fixing it and cleaning it. And spending your 'Īd day doing just that, trust me, it's not fun.

Nevertheless, it is so beautiful to see the Muslims happy and joyful on the 'Īd day. It is so nice to watch everybody on the Musalla after 'Īd prayer exchanging hugs, kisses and handshaking with beautiful words of greetings and du’ā’. But what is it with hugging and kissing on 'Īd day anyways? Is this is the way to greet and congratulate one another for the 'Īd? Is there any standard way to do it? Do we know any specific Sunnah for greeting from the beloved Messenger of Allāh, salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam, to follow on 'Īd day?

Greeting in general is a beautiful Sunnah that Islam requires it's followers to observe.
Spreading salam or peace in Islam is a duty upon every single Muslim. And responding to the greeting is even obligatory. We know that from so many direct and indirect aspects of our religion.

1. As-Salam is the beautiful name of Allāh subḥānahu wa ta'āla and one of His Almighty attributes.
2. When Adam was created, he was taught the greetings of salam by the angels. Since then it had become his way of greeting and the way of his offspring.
3. We send salam and blessings on our beloved Messenger whenever he is mentioned.
4. The greeting with salam, by the angels and other messengers of Allāh, was mentioned in the Qur'an many times.
5. Laylatul Qar, the Night of Power, was praised with salam and peace.
6. Spreading salam to everyone is a great virtue, as mentioned in hadith Abdullah ibn Salam may Allāh be pleased with him who narrated, the Messenger of Allāh said: “O people! spread salam, and feed the needy and pray at night while people are asleep, you will enter Paradise in peace.” (Tirmidhi). And in hadith Abu Hurayrah may Allāh be pleased with him, the Messenger of Allāh said: “You shall not enter Paradise until you (truly) believe, and you will not (truly) believe until you love one an another. Shall I guide you to something if you do would make you so? Spread salam amongst yourselves.” (Muslim).

Allāh subḥānahu wa ta'āla says: “When a (courteous) greeting is offered you, meet it with a greeting still more courteous, or (at least) of equal courtesy. Allāh takes careful account of all things.” (an-Nisaa’ 4:86).

So what are the etiquettes we should follow for ‘Īd greeting?

1. Start with salam (as-salamu alaykum) before anything else, if within a group, one salam is enough to everybody. If you were entering a room full of people then it’s better to direct salam to three directions; right, left and front.
2. Try to be the first who starts with salam. Abu Uمامah narrates the Messenger of Allāhwas once asked: “When two men meet, who should start with the salam greeting first?” Rasulullah replied: “The one whose more worthy with Allāh.” (Abu Dawood and Tirmidhi)
3. Hand shaking is the standard greeting. Al-Baraa' may Allāh be pleased with him narrated, the Messenger of Allāh said: “There is no occasion when two Muslims meet and shake hands, except that Allāh forgives their sins before they part away.” (Ibn Majah).
4. On regular basis, hugging and bowing down is not required, as matter of fact bowing down is not permissible to anyone but Allāh subḥānahu wa ta'āla. Anas
may Allāh be pleased with him narrated; a man asked the Messenger of Allāh, “If one of us meets his brother or his friend, should he bow down for him? He said “No”. “Should he embrace him and kiss him?” the man asked. “No” The Messenger replied. The man then asked, “Should he then hold his arm and shake his hand?” He said, “Yes”. (Tirmidhi)

5. When greeting people, we should do it with a cheerful face. Meeting people with cheerful face does not hurt your face muscles or your ego. Abu Dhar may Allāh be pleased with him narrated, the Messenger of Allāh said: “Do not disparage (underestimate) any good deed (no matter how small it is), even if that deed was to meet your brother with a cheerful face.” (Muslim)

6. Hugging and kissing, in the way described earlier, on special occasions is acceptable. It is a cultural matter that shari'ah does not object to. It was reported that when Zaid ibn Haritha came back to Madeenah (from a journey), the Messenger of Allāh stood up to greet him, he kissed him and embraced him. (Tirmidhi) And when Ja'far ibn Abi Talib the cousin of the Messenger of Allāh came back for Abyssinia, after his long absence, the Messenger of Allāhembraced him. (Abu Ya'la)

7. Verbal greeting with any permissible phrase, such as “Taqabal Allahu minna wa minkum” may Allāh accept (the good deeds) from you and from us, is recommended. This was reported as the practice of the Sahaba, may Allāh be pleased with them. Other phrases are also acceptable as long as prayers and invocations mentioned are halal, without phrases of shirk involved.

8. It is important here to mention that the Messenger of Allāh salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam never shook hands with foreign women, women who are not mahram to him, let alone to hug them or kiss them. Foreign women are those who are not related to the person by blood relation or not of his unmarriageable kin. And the best example is the example of Muḥammad salla Allahu alyhi wa sallam.

In conclusion, the 'Īd day is a day of celebration and praising the Lord subḥānahu wa ta'āla. It is also a day of worship, and therefore we should not turn it into a day of disobedience. The festivity of the 'Īd does not mean the violation of the good deeds. The greetings on 'Īd day, are the manifestation of joy and happiness. Regardless of your cultural choice, when the 'Īd comes, get ready to join the hug-athon and kiss-athon. May Allāh accept from us the best of our deeds, say āmīn.
Shawwal

Ar-Rayyan: Are You a Club Member? – Yaser Birjas

If you are an elite status frequent flyer with one of the national airlines, you will realize the benefits of such status when you need it the most – when the airport is crowded and you need to secure your spot on the airplane. If you are a club member of any of the national or international flying programs, you will enjoy privileges not available to the public. The number one privilege is status. When passengers are called for departure they are mentioned by their flying status; first class is first and foremost, next comes the club members and then all other travelers through general boarding.

As a club member you are recognized for your hard work. You enjoy boarding earlier than others with no long delays. You even walk through a special path with a club logo on the carpet. Once you pass through it, it closes after you leaving the rest of the crowd waiting to enter later through a different path. As a club member you enjoy traveling rewards for your hard work on the journeys you had undertaken throughout your career with the carrier. You receive rewards such as, and not limited to, spontaneous upgrades, waving charges for extra baggage, and most importantly a private lounge in the busy airport. The gates of the club are opened only for members of the flying club, and if you are not a member; no entry.

“Ar-Rayyan” is a gate for exclusive heavenly elite, it is the gate of Paradise through which members of a special class will enter and once they are all in it will close. It is a gate for an exclusive club; a club for those who travel the distance with a special airline: “aS-Saa'imoon”, the fasting people.

Narrated Sahl ibn Sa’ad, radiyallahu anh, the Messenger of Allāh salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam said: “In paradise there is a gate which is called Ar-Rayyan through which the people who fasted will enter on the day of Judgment, and no one else shall enter along-side them. It will be asked, ’where are the Saa'imoon, those who fasted?’ and they will walk through it, and upon the entry of the last of them, it will be locked, and no one else will walk through it.” (Bukhāri and Muslim)

In order to enter through this gate you have to be a member of the club “Ar-Rayyan”. Membership was secured for all those who follow the rules of fasting, and privileges hence, will be provide thereafter.

What are some of the privileges of this membership?

Because Muslims Matter.
1. **Upgrade to an elite status, the status of “Muttaqeen” – Righteous.**

As a club member you shall receive a status upgrade, from average to exceptional from regular worshiper to Muttaqi – righteous, all by the will of Allāh.

Allāh subḥānahu wa ta’āla says:

“O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that you may become Righteous.” Al-Bakara 2:183.

It was reported that Ali ibn Abi Talib, radiyallahu anh, said: “Be concerned more over the acceptance of your deeds than over the deeds themselves for Allāh does not accept deeds except from the righteous. Didn't you read Allāh's statement: “Verily, Allāh accepts only from the Muttaqeen -Righteous.” Al-Maa’iedah 5:27.

2. **Earning bonus miles**

As a club member you will receive thousands of miles and even more, that takes you far away from the heat of Jahannam to extremely outstanding destination, destination: Jannah.

Narrated Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri, radiyallahu anh, the Messenger of Allāh salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam said: “Whoever fasts one day for the sake of Allāh, Allāh will remove him a distance of seventy years' from the Hell-fire.” (Bukhāri and Muslim)

3. **No charges for extra load**

As a club member you will not be charged for extra load and baggage. Now that is Forgiveness, and by the grace of Allāh, all sins will be forgiven.

Allāh subḥānahu wa ta’āla says: “For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast, for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in Allāh's praise, for them has Allāh prepared forgiveness and great reward.” Al-Ahzaab 33:35.

4. **Firewall protection**

As a club member you shall be protected by a firewall to shield you from sins and errors in this Dunya and from the Hellfire in the Akhira.
Narrated Abu Hurayrah, radiyallahu anh, the Messenger of Allâh, salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam, said: “Fasting is protecting shield, so when it is the day when one of you are fasting, let him not behave or speak indecently; if someone tries to abuse him or fight him, let him say, 'I am fasting'.” (Bukhârî and Muslim)

Ibn AbdelBarr rahimahullah said: “Protecting shield means screening from the Hellfire, and that is enough virtue for the fasting one.” Qadhi Iyaad rahimahullah says also: “Protecting shield means a screen and a deterrence from committing obscenity and sins, or could be a barrier and screen from reaching the Hellfire, or a protection from all of the aforementioned.”

5. Divine fragrance

As a club member you will enjoy acquiring a fragrance that is most beloved by the Divine, Allâhsubhânahu wa ta’âla.

Narrated Abu Hurayrah, radiyallahu anh, the Messenger of Allâh, salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam, said: “By the One in whose hand is the soul of Muḥammad, the smell emanating from the mouth of the one fasting is better with Allâh than the fragrance of musk.” (Bukhârî and Muslim)

6. Hotline with the Owner

As a club member you have the privilege of being rewarded directly from the Owner of the day of Judgment subhânahu wa ta’âla, and Owner of the gate “Ar-Rayyan”.

Narrated Abu Hurayrah may Allâh be pleased with, the Messenger of Allâh salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam said: “All of the actions of the son of Adam are for him except the fast, for that is for me and I will reward it Myself.” (Bukhârî and Muslim)

7. Two special moments of joy and happiness

As a club member you will have two special moments of joy and happiness, one is in this world before departure and the other one when you reach your destination safely, in the Akhira.

Narrated Abu Hurayrah, radiyallahu anh, the Messenger of Allâh salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam said: “The one fasting has two time of joy, when he breaks his fast he is happy and when he meets his lord he will rejoice at his fasting.” (Bukhârî and Muslim)
8. A brand new software for your heart, called: generosity

As a club member you shall receive a special software upgrade to your already existing heartware. It is a gift of peace and serenity and the love of generosity. You shall happily rid yourself of stinginess and miserly. Enjoy your new big heart.

Narrated Ibn 'Abbas, radiyallahu anh who said: “The Prophet, salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam, was the most generous of people, and he was even more generous during Ramadan when Jibreel met him. Jibreel used to meet him every night in Ramadan until it was over and the Prophet would go through the Qur'an with him. The Messenger of Allāh was more generous with good things than the blowing wind (which brings rain and welfare).” (Bukhāri)

If you would like to become a member, it's easy. Just open an account with “aS-Saa'imoon” and become a frequent flyer i.e. fasting. Do not stop after Ramadan otherwise your account will become inactive and you lose your mileage and privileges. Keep your account active and fly the distance with “aS-Saa'imoon”. Imām An-Nawawi rahimahullah said: “Scholars say of the meaning of this (hadith Ar-Rayyan), that a person is known through his worship and deeds for frequent fasting.” Therefore it's all about days following Ramadan until the next Ramadan. How often are you going to fly with “aS-Saa'imoon”?

Now, are you a club member? Join Now and open an account with your intention today. Become a member, club Ar-Rayyan.