

## What this presentation will cover:

1. The virtues and importance of Ramadan
2. The virtues of fasting
3. Spiritual and health benefits of fasting
4. The rules of fasting – who and how?
5. Virtues of eating *Suhur*
6. Virtues of eating *Iftar*
7. What to eat and what not to eat
8. What breaks and invalids a fast
9. Qada and Kaffarah
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30. Preparing for Ramadan
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37. How to maintain the Ramadan spirit after Ramadan

VIRTUES  
OF THE MONTH OF  
RAMADAN

# RAMADAN IN THE NOBLE QUR'AN

# شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ

**“The month of Ramadan is the one in which the Qur’an was revealed.” (Surah al-Baqarah 2:185)**

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ received the first revelation of Surah ‘Alaq in the month of Ramadan.

The Noble Qur’an was first written by Allah Ta’ala in the *Lawh Mahfuz* (the Preserved Tablet). It was then brought down from there to the lowest heaven in the *Laylatu ‘l-Qadr*, the special night found in the month of Ramadan.

This shows that the Noble Qur’an was revealed by Allah Ta’ala in the month of Ramadan in two ways.

Allah Ta’ala chose this blessed month to reveal His Noble Book, showing how important this month must be.

# RAMADAN IN THE HADITH

# HADITH 1

إِذَا جَاءَ رَمَضَانُ فَتُحَّتْ أَبْوَابُ الْجَنَّةِ، وَعُلِقَتْ أَبْوَابُ النَّارِ، وَصُفِّدَتِ الشَّيَاطِينُ

**When Ramadan comes, the doors of heaven are opened up, the doors of hell are closed, and the *Shayatin* are chained up. (Muslim)**

When the month of Ramadan enters, it becomes easier to enter heaven and more difficult to enter hell, as Allah Ta'ala makes it easier to perform good deeds and more difficult to do sins.

One reason is because the *Shayatin*, who usually encourage us to do sins by putting thoughts in our hearts, are chained up and can no longer influence us.

This raises a question: Why do some people still sin in Ramadan?

Scholars explain that it could be because not all *Shayatin* are locked up: only the worst ones (as another Hadith explains).

Or it could be that we become so used to sins throughout the year that it becomes a habit and an addiction, and we find it hard to leave it, even though there aren't any *Shayatin* to instigate us.

# HADITH 2

## The Hadith of ibn Khuzaima

O' people, a great month has come to you, a blessed month, a month in which there's a night better than a thousand months.

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ أَظَلَّكُمْ شَهْرٌ عَظِيمٌ شَهْرٌ مُبَارَكٌ  
شَهْرٌ فِيهِ لَيْلَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ

Just having the *Laylatu 'l-Qadr* in Ramadan is a big enough reason to realise that the month of Ramadan itself must be virtuous and full of blessings.

Allah has made its fasting compulsory and its nightly prayer voluntary.

جَعَلَ اللَّهُ صِيَامَهُ فَرِيضَةً، وَقِيَامَ لَيْلِهِ تَطَوُّعًا

It's the only month in which Allah Ta'ala makes fasting compulsory, as He knows the benefit fasting has and how it can allow us to make the most of this blessed month. The nightly prayer refers to the *Tarawih* prayer, which is not obligatory, but is important for everyone to pray.

**Whoever performs a good deed in it, it will be as though he has performed a *Fard* act in another month.**

مَنْ تَقَرَّبَ فِيهِ بِخُصْلَةٍ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ، كَانَ كَمَنْ أَدَّى فَرِيضَةً فِيمَا سِوَاهُ

In a Hadith, Allah Ta'ala says that no act is more beloved to Him than when we perform *Fard* actions, showing how immense their rewards must be. In Ramadan, every good deed gets that huge amount of reward.

**Whoever performs a *Fard* act in it, it will be as though he has performed seventy *Fard* acts in another month.**

وَمَنْ أَدَّى فِيهِ فَرِيضَةً، كَانَ كَمَنْ أَدَّى سَبْعِينَ فَرِيضَةً فِيمَا سِوَاهُ

The reward of every *Fard* action we do gets multiplied by seventy times. This means the reward of praying one *Fajr* is the same as praying *Fajr* for seventy days!

وَهُوَ شَهْرُ الصَّبْرِ وَالصَّبْرُ ثَوَابُهُ الْجَنَّةُ

**It is a month of patience, and the reward of patience is heaven.**

Ramadan is a month in which we have to show a lot of patience: we get thirsty and hungry, cranky and tired, but we have to restrain ourselves and do good deeds and avoid sins. This is what makes people go heaven so easily because of Ramadan.

وَشَهْرُ الْمُوَأَسَاةِ وَشَهْرٌ يَزْدَادُ فِيهِ رِزْقُ  
الْمُؤْمِنِ

**It is a month of caring for one another, and a month in which a believer's sustenance increases.**

In Ramadan, we should focus on caring for one another, whether it's our families and friends by feeding them and keeping close ties, or others such as the poor around the world. We should make a point of helping as many people as we can.

It's also a month in which Allah Ta'ala gives us more sustenance, so we shouldn't be stingy and hold back. We should spend as much as possible.

**Whoever gives food to a fasting person to break their fast in it, it will be a source of forgiveness for him for his sins, and a source of his neck being freed from the fire, and he will have the same reward (as the one who fasted) without any reward being reduced at all.**

By giving someone the food to break their fast, we get the same reward they had for keeping the fast. We should make a point of giving money in charity and Masajid to buy *Iftar* food so that we don't miss out on this reward.

**Allah gives this reward to anyone who feeds a fasting person with even a date, a sip of water or (even) diluted milk.**

Even if it means we give something as simple and cheap as water, we can still get the full reward. The Hadith even says we can give watered down milk, which may not taste as well as full undiluted milk, yet Allah Ta'ala will appreciate it from us.

مَنْ فَطَّرَ فِيهِ صَائِمًا كَانَ مَغْفِرَةً لِدُنُوبِهِ  
وَعِثْقَ رَقَبَتِهِ مِنَ النَّارِ وَكَانَ لَهُ مِثْلُ أَجْرِهِ  
مِنْ غَيْرِ أَنْ يَنْتَقِصَ مِنْ أَجْرِهِ شَيْءٌ

يُعْطِي اللَّهُ هَذَا الثَّوَابَ مَنْ فَطَّرَ صَائِمًا  
عَلَى تَمْرَةٍ أَوْ شَرْبَةِ مَاءٍ أَوْ مَذْقَةٍ لَبَنٍ

**It is a month, whose beginning is mercy, its middle is forgiveness, and its ending is being freed from the fire of hell.**

وَهُوَ شَهْرٌ أَوَّلُهُ رَحْمَةٌ، وَأَوْسَطُهُ مَغْفِرَةٌ،  
وَأَخِيرُهُ عِتْقٌ مِنَ النَّارِ

Scholars explain this part of the Hadith in several ways.

It could be that in the beginning, we all receive the mercy of Allah Ta'ala and find it easy to leave sins and do good, and by the middle of the month, we have been forgiven for our previous sins, and by the end, we will have done enough good deeds to save ourselves from hell regardless of our sins.

Or it could mean that for those who are fully ready for the month before, they will experience its mercy from day one, and will achieve the most reward. However, those who haven't fully changed in the beginning ten days but decide to halfway through will at least be forgiven for their sins, though they will miss out on the mercy and complete reward. As for those who don't make the most of the first two thirds and have wasted them away, at least they should make the most of the last ten days to save themselves from the fire of hell.

**Whoever makes things easier for his slave,  
Allah will forgive him and free him from the  
fire of hell.**

مَنْ خَفَّفَ عَنْ مَمْلُوكِهِ غَفَرَ اللَّهُ لَهُ،  
وَأَعْتَقَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ

This part of the Hadith tells us that whoever has people working under them in this tough month, especially if their workers are fasting, and therefore thirsty, hungry and tired, then the owner and boss should try to make things easier for them.

A company boss should make things easier for their employees, and schools and Madaris should make things easier for their students. Parents should also make things easier for their children.

In the same way, we should be forgiving towards others and excuse them for anything they do, as the fast brings out the worst of them due to their hunger!

Try to do four things as much as possible: two of them which please your Lord, and the other two you can't do without. As for those that please your Lord, they are testifying "La ilaha illa'Llah" and asking for forgiveness. As for those which you can't do without, they are asking for heaven from Allah and seeking His protection from hell.

وَاسْتَكْتَرُوا فِيهِ مِنْ أَرْبَعِ خِصَالٍ خَصَلْتَيْنِ  
تُرْضُونَ بِهِمَا رَبَّكُمْ، وَخَصَلْتَيْنِ لَا غِنَى بِكُمْ  
عَنْهُمَا فَأَمَّا الْخَصَلَتَانِ اللَّتَانِ تُرْضُونَ بِهِمَا  
رَبَّكُمْ: فَشَهَادَةُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ،  
وَتَسْتَغْفِرُونَهُ وَأَمَّا اللَّتَانِ لَا غِنَى بِكُمْ عَنْهُمَا:  
فَتَسْأَلُونَ اللَّهَ الْجَنَّةَ، وَتَعُوذُونَ بِهِ مِنَ النَّارِ.

We should try to do as much *Dhikr* and *Du'as* as possible, especially in the above four ways. Shaykh Ibrahim Dhorat (Rahimahu'Llah) suggested a brilliant way to gather all phrases into one phrase that we can repeatedly say on the go:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ أَللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ النَّارِ

**Whoever fills a fasting person in this month, Allah will give him water to drink from my pool (of *Kawthar*), and he will not feel thirsty all the way to his entering heaven.**

وَمَنْ أَشْبَعَ فِيهِ صَائِمًا، سَقَاهُ اللَّهُ مِنْ حَوْضِي شَرْبَةً لَا يَظْمَأُ حَتَّى يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ ends the Hadith by once again emphasising feeding the poor, showing its importance in Ramadan.

He tells us that the one who feeds the poor will be given water from the pool of *Kawthar* to drink on the Day of Judgement, when everyone will be thirsty and sweating due to the intense heat. Whoever drinks from this pool will not face the effects of that day, and we can guarantee ourselves that drink if we feed poor people this Ramadan.

FASTING

# FASTING IN THE NOBLE QUR'AN

## Surah al-Baqarah 2:183-185

**O' those who believe, you have been instructed to fast just as those who were before you were instructed, so that you can save yourselves (from sins).**

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

Allah Ta'ala tells us that the previous religions were instructed to fast too, just like we are. The reason for fasting was always the same: fasting helps to build discipline.

When we fast, we have to fight ourselves to avoid eating and drinking what we want. We constantly remind ourselves that Allah Ta'ala is watching us and we are fasting. In the same way, it's hoped that after Ramadan, we will develop the same thinking if there's ever an opportunity to commit a sin, that Allah Ta'ala is watching, and this will help us control ourselves and fight the temptations to sin.

**(The fasts) are for a few countable days.**

أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ ۚ

The next verse begins by telling us that fasting is only for a small number of days compared to the rest of the days of the year in which we are allowed to eat. It's not a big sacrifice for us as the majority of the year we aren't obliged to fast!

However, some scholars feel that this part of the verse links to the previous verse's ending: Allah Ta'ala may also be telling us that we have to save ourselves from sins only for a few countable days!

Though it sounds absurd to say that we should only be good Muslims for one month, it does have something behind it. When we save ourselves from committing sins for thirty days straight, it will become a habit, and we will feel ashamed to break our streak and disobey Allah Ta'ala. This is why it's only a matter of being our best for just thirty days, after which we will automatically become better Muslims in Sha Allah.

فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ  
مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ

**Whoever from amongst you is ill or on a journey, then (they should fast) the (same) number on other days.**

The next part explains that those people who can't fast should fast on other days. It is Allah Ta'ala's mercy on our sick and those who are facing the hardships of travel that they don't have to fast in Ramadan if it's difficult.

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ

**Those who are unable to fast are required to give compensation by feeding the poor.**

As for those who can't fast at all, due to old age or a chronic illness, Allah Ta'ala has even given an alternative: giving *Sadaqah* for every day they can't fast (more details on *Fidya* will come later).

**Whoever gives more voluntarily then it's better for him.**

فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ

As for those who can't fast at all and therefore pay compensation, then the required amount is only a minimum so that it can accommodate those who are poor and can't give much. But someone who feels bad about not being able to fast should give as much charity as they can, and the reward will be greater.

**But fasting is better for you, if you knew (the benefit of it).**

وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

However, Allah Ta'ala reminds us at the end that the benefits of fasting are immense, and we should never try to miss any fast of Ramadan. It comes in the Hadiths that if a person deliberately misses a fast of Ramadan, then even fasting his entire life won't bring the same reward than he would have received for fasting that one day!

# FASTING IN THE HADITH

# HADITH 1

Every action of the son of Adam ('alayhi 's-Salam) is multiplied (in reward), as good deeds are (rewarded from) tenfold up to seven-hundred fold. Allah Ta'ala says, "Except fasts. (Fasting) is for me and I will give the reward for it. (My servant) leaves his desires and his food for my sake."  
(Muslim)

From the Noble Qur'an, we can learn that out of His kindness and generosity, Allah Ta'ala rewards all good deeds by giving at least ten times the reward for it, up to seven hundred times. However, when it comes to fasting, He hasn't set a limit, and He will personally give the reward for it. This reward may be exclusive mercy, a greater heaven or His close friendship.

This is because other good deeds don't require that level of sacrifice that fasting does. Fasting is not just a physical act of worship, but psychological too, as it involves going against your wishes for over half the day at times!

In fact, in another narration, Allah Ta'ala says that He Himself is the reward, showing that He will take care of His servant and grant Him his love and happiness!

كُلُّ عَمَلٍ ابْنِ آدَمَ يُضَاعَفُ، الْحَسَنَةُ عَشْرُ  
أَمْثَالِهَا إِلَى سَبْعِمِائَةٍ ضِعْفٍ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ  
وَجَلَّ: إِلَّا الصَّوْمَ، فَإِنَّهُ لِي وَأَنَا أَجْزِي بِهِ،  
يَدَعُ شَهْوَتَهُ وَطَعَامَهُ مِنْ أَجْلِي "

# HADITH 2

**Whoever fasts the month Ramadan with faith and in anticipation for a reward, all of his previous sins will be forgiven. (Bukhari)**

مَنْ صَامَ رَمَضَانَ، إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا، غُفِرَ لَهُ  
مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ

This famous Hadith tells us that after fasting in Ramadan, we'll leave the month with all of our previous sins forgiven. However, the unique aspect of this Hadith is that it attaches two conditions to this virtue.

Both conditions are reasons for why this person should be fasting. They should primarily be fasting because they believe the Noble Qur'an to be correct in its claim that fasting will help them become better, and they believe the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and that whatever he has brought is for the best. Secondly, they should realise the great reward behind fasting and fast out of eagerness for this reward.

Both of these conditions show that fasting has to be with a good intention and purpose. This means that if a person is fasting merely because "it's that time of the year", it's customary, or because they fear what others would think about them were they to miss the fast, then the person would not be fasting in its true respect and would miss out on all the benefits of fasting in Ramadan. Therefore, let us correct our intentions so that we don't miss out on this reward.

# HADITH 3

**The person who fasts will have happiness twice: Once when he breaks his fast, and another when he meets his Lord. (Muslim)**

لِلصَّائِمِ فَرْحَتَانِ: فَرْحَةٌ عِنْدَ فِطْرِهِ، وَفَرْحَةٌ  
عِنْدَ لِقَاءِ رَبِّهِ

The happiness felt by a person when they break their fast is inexplicable. Even if they don't have the best of food, just water itself will seem like the best thing to have, and he will appreciate whatever food he has.

This Hadith then says that fasting gives you nothing but happiness eventually in the hereafter when we meet Allah Ta'ala and see the reward we have for our fasts.

Note that the beginning of the Arabic wording of the Hadith literally translates to "The faster", or if you want to go into the Arabic language in depth, "the one who truly fasts". This shows that this happiness will only be experienced by someone who's fasting for true sincere reasons, as the previous Hadith showed. Only they will feel that their fast was worth it, and will feel the joy of fulfilling such a gruelling act of worship when they break their fast.

Therefore the joy mentioned in this Hadith would then mean the joy of having done a great deed, rather than just the joy of eating food!

# OTHER BENEFITS OF FASTING

Besides the spiritual benefits of fasting, there are even health benefits:

1. Our body starts to repair itself
2. We lose unwanted fat
3. It lowers the risk of diabetes
4. It helps reduce the risk of heart disease by lowering blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and other harmful triggers.
5. It helps the growth of new neurons in your brain
6. Studies show it prevents diseases like Alzheimer's and cancer.
7. It gives your body a detox and flushes out harmful toxins present in your body.

Lastly, fasting helps us understand what the poor people in the world go through, and appreciate the food Allah Ta'ala has given us.

However, the main purpose of fasting is what the Noble Qur'an tells us: it helps us develop *Taqwa* and a self-discipline that allows us to control ourselves when we have desires of committing sins.

WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is an act of worship, and as with all acts of worship, there are certain rules we have to follow.

### **What is fasting?**

Fasting is intentionally avoiding food, drink and having relations with your spouse from dawn (when *Fajr* begins and *Suhur* time ends) until sunset (when *Maghrib* begins).

### **How do I start a fast?**

A fast starts as soon as you make the intention of fasting and therefore you avoid doing anything that breaks the fast. The intention doesn't need to be said verbally, nor is there a *Du'a* to initiate the fast.

For any fast besides *Qada* fasts (missed fasts that are made up later), you have all the way until midday (*Zawal/Zuhr* time) to decide whether or not you wish to fast.

This means that if a person felt ill and decided not to fast at *Suhur* time, but then didn't eat anything until a little before *Zuhr*, and thereafter felt better and decided to fast, then their fast would count as long as it's not a *Qada* fast. If it's a *Qada* fast, the intention must be made before the fast begins at *Fajr*.

WHO HAS TO FAST?

Anyone who meets the following criteria must fast:

- *Balig* (mature according to *Shari'ah* after either having a nocturnal emission or reaching the average age of puberty of fourteen and a half years)
- Sane – anyone suffering from a mental illness that either makes them unaware of fasting, or unable to understand the idea of fasting (such as those suffering from Downs Syndrome) will not have to fast
- Not travelling more than forty-eight miles
- Isn't suffering from any chronic illnesses which prevents fasting, such as severe diabetes, or even weakness from old age
- Fasting won't harm the person or their child (if a woman is pregnant or breastfeeding)

## What if someone is excused?

If a person genuinely feels they shouldn't be fasting for the last two reasons, they should get it confirmed by a doctor, ideally a Muslim doctor who understands the Islamic importance of fasting along with looking after your health, rather than just looking at the harms it may have.

Though health is extremely important, as our bodies are a trust from Allah Ta'ala, we should only take concessions if we need to—not just because we may be sinful otherwise, but because we should feel that we're missing out on the immense reward and benefits of fasting.

As for travellers, though they are excused from a technical aspect, if they can, they too should fast if the conditions are not difficult. In the time of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, travelling required you to cross deserts in the baking heat for weeks with the danger of dehydration. Because travel has become easier and convenient, we should try to fast if we can.

Lastly, though children who are not *Balig* are exempt, they too should be encouraged to fast from a young age if they are willing and it isn't affecting their health or studies. An environment in which everyone eats their *Suhur* and *Iftar* together, prays *Tarawih* in the Masjid together (or at home for girls and their mothers), along with constant reminders of Allah Ta'ala's rewards, will create a lasting memorable impression on children that will make them not only habituated with Ramadan when older, but fond of it too.

If a person can't genuinely fast, they will be required to give *Fidya*, which is giving the amount given for *Sadaqatu 'l-Fitr* for every day they can't fast.

SUHUR

*Suhur* is a meal eaten a little before the beginning of *Fajr* time. It's a way to fuel up before the fast begins. Not only is it beneficial for your body, but it has its spiritual benefits too.

In a Hadith, *Suhur* has been called "*Barakah*" i.e. a blessing, as it allows you to fast with less difficulties and also enriches you with the spiritual energy needed to perform good deeds throughout the fast. This is why we must have it, even if it's light.

It has even been mentioned in a Hadith that Christians and Jews fast too, but they don't eat *Suhur*. Therefore, the *Suhur* meal allows us to distinguish ourselves as Muslims.

It shows Allah Ta'ala that we are needy of the food He gives to us and allows us to display our humility before him—we are weak and need to eat before we fast.

If a person misses their *Suhur*, they should still fast, though it may be difficult.

As mentioned earlier, there are no specific *Du'as* to be read at the time of fasting. There are some which are commonly recited:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَصُومُ غَدًا لَكَ فَاعْفِرْ لِي مَا قَدَّمْتُ وَمَا أَخَّرْتُ  
نَوَيْتُ صَوْمَ غَدٍ

But there's no *Du'a* found in the Hadith for beginning a fast.

IFTAR

*Iftar* is the meal eaten to break the fast as soon as the *Maghrib Adhan* is called. Break your fast immediately without delay, as there are many Hadiths that emphasise the importance of breaking your fast immediately:

**People will continue experiencing good if they keep breaking their fast straight away. (Bukhari)**

**Allah Ta'ala says, "The most beloved to me of my servants are those who break their fast the soonest." (Tirmidhi)**

**Islam will remain prevalent as long as people break their fasts early. The Jews and Christians are the ones who delay it. (Abu Dawud)**

The *Sunnah* is to break it with fresh dates ideally. If they aren't available, then normal dry dates are fine too. If neither is available, then water. Dates have been called *Barakah* for *Iftar* too. Try having dates with their pits removed, with cucumber halves added inside. Not only is it a *Sunnah* to eat both together (though not necessarily a *Sunnah* of having *Iftar*), it actually tastes nice!

لَا يَزَالُ النَّاسُ بِخَيْرٍ مَا عَجَّلُوا الْفِطْرَ

قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِنَّ أَحَبَّ عِبَادِي إِلَيَّ

أَعَجَّلُهُمْ فِطْرًا

لَا يَزَالُ الدِّينُ ظَاهِرًا مَا عَجَلَ النَّاسُ الْفِطْرَ،

لِأَنَّ الْيَهُودَ، وَالنَّصَارَى يُؤَخِّرُونَ

In the Hadiths, we find that the *Du'as* made at the time of breaking a fast are readily accepted (Tirmidhi). Before you break your fast, and before the *Mu'adhin* calls the *Adhan* for *Magrib*, sit facing the *Qiblah* and make *Du'a* for at least five minutes.

Pray for yourself, your family, your education, your career, anything you need help with, pray for heaven, for salvation from hell, pray for those who are sick and those who have gone, pray for your teachers, and pray for Allah Ta'ala to accept your fast and Ramadan, and to allow you to continue your change beyond Ramadan.

Try to make *Du'a* using the *Sunnah Du'as* found in the *Ahadith*, and learn their meanings beforehand so that you can ask wholeheartedly.

When the *Adhan* is called, immediately break your fast with the following *Du'as*:

**O' Allah. I have fasted for your sake and I break my fast with the food you have provided. (Abu Dawud)**

**My thirst has gone, water has satiated my veins and my reward is secure if Allah wills (Abu Dawud)**

اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ صُومْتُ، وَعَلَى رِزْقِكَ أَفْطَرْتُ

ذَهَبَ الظَّمَأُ وَابْتَلَّتِ العُرُوقُ، وَثَبَتَ الأَجْرُ

إِنْ شَاءَ اللهُ

Avoid eating too much when breaking your fast just before *Salah*. You should suffice on just dates and water (and any other light food such as nuts). You should eat the main meal of your food after *Salah*.

In some *Masajid* (and homes that live nearby *Masajid*), unfortunately there are people who eat their main meal, or at least part of it, before *Maghrib Salah*. Not only do they end up rushing their food, but they even sometimes delay *Salah* because of it. Some *Musallis* may even miss a *Rak'ah*!

Also, avoid bringing food into the *Masajid* that may leave a smell or a mess if eaten in the *Masjid*. Ideally, such foods are best left to be eaten at home. We should ideally come to the *Masjid* for 'Asr and stay until *Magrib* and only bring dates and water. Even those who live nearby should do the same. The time between 'Asr and *Magrib* is a valuable time for worship and for *Du'as* to be accepted, so we shouldn't spend it at home if possible, as it may be easier to get distracted there.

In fact, even mothers and sisters at home should make the most of this time. All food preparations should ideally be done before 'Asr so that the time between 'Asr and *Magrib* can be utilised in reading the Noble *Qur'an*, remembering Allah Ta'ala and making *Du'a*. Though the "fry-ups" may not be freshly fried at the eating time, at least it will be comfort knowing your family had a fair chance at getting closer to Allah Ta'ala.

# WHAT TO EAT AND WHAT NOT TO EAT

## What to Eat

Since the *Suhur* and *Iftar* meals are supposed to keep you fuelled for the entire day, it's important to ensure you eat the right food and drink.

In general, you should choose foods that are rich in the following:

- Protein – Proteins take time to digest and stay longer in your stomach, and prevent you feeling hungry throughout your day. Proteins are also vital for building and repairing your body. Proteins include meat, chicken, eggs, cheese, yoghurt, and milk. Just make sure the meat and chicken is healthily cooked!
- Wholegrain carbohydrates – Carbohydrates are our main energy source, but we should choose wholegrain carbohydrates such as brown bread, as they not only help with our digestion, but release energy slower than sugars. These include brown bread, wholegrain cereals and oats.
- Nuts – Nuts, like the above two, take longer to digest and make you feel full for longer. They're also packed with protein and can be added as a topping to many foods.

- Fruits and hydrating vegetables – Fruits have a high water content, along with a range of vitamins. It's also *Sunnah* to have dates for *Suhur*. You can even opt for a fruit smoothie! As for vegetables, choose those that have a higher water content, such as cucumbers, tomatoes and lettuce.
- Liquids – You're going to be without water for possibly fifteen hours or more. You'll need to drink as much water as you can drink, though you need to be careful which liquids you choose, as sugary drinks and caffeine are bad for fasts. Have water throughout the time between *Iftar* and *Suhur*.

## What to avoid

There are some foods you should avoid if you want your fast to be easy.

- Avoid sugary foods and drinks, especially fizzy drinks. They release energy quickly, but then make you feel tired and drained throughout the day. Some fruit juices also tend to have a lot of added sugar. Fizzy drinks also make you feel bloated and full, depriving you of that well-needed food and water.
- Avoid fatty foods, as they just get stored up and add unnecessary weight. Your body first burns off carbohydrates and then fats. If you are eating fatty food, most likely it is just being stored as more fat!
- Avoids spicy foods. These may trigger off an upset stomach or even cause acid reflux and heartburn. It will be difficult treating these illnesses without being able to have medicine throughout the day.
- Avoid salty foods. Additional salt will create an imbalance in the water and salt concentration in your body, making you feel the need to have more water and therefore make you even more thirsty!

- Avoid caffeine. Caffeine is a diuretic and makes you go to the washroom, making you lose the water you had drank earlier to store throughout your fast. As tempting as it may be (especially if you suffer from the withdrawal symptoms of not having your three cups of tea a day), avoid tea, coffee and energy drinks with caffeine if you want to avoid feeling dehydrated.
- Avoid overeating! Ramadan is for eating less, and the food is supposed to be a meal to keep you going for the day, not the week! You don't need to make up for the meals you've missed out on, nor will your stomach be able to digest it! That would just contradict everything the fast stands for!
- Overeating can also lead to indigestion, heartburn and an upset bowel. It will lead to feeling bloated and a constant need to burp and offend your fellow *Musallis* during *Tarawih*!
- You will definitely feel hunger and thirst throughout the day, but it's just important to reduce it as much as possible by eating correctly. This is why the reward is in the hardship.

WHAT BREAKS AND  
INVALIDATES A FAST

Fasting is from dawn to sunset. However, if a person eats, drinks or has relations with their spouse anytime between those two points, their fast may break and become invalid.

The following break the fast:

- Eating, drinking deliberately whilst being aware that you're fasting. This also includes
  - Swallowing toothpaste or mouthwash
  - Swallowing blood from the gums if it's more than the saliva it's mixed with
  - Swallowing leftover food in between your teeth if it's the size of a small chickpea or bigger
  - When medicine from a nasal spray passes down your throat
  - Inhaling in medicine such as when using Asthma pump inhalers
- Swallowing water when gargling your mouth
- Inhaling smoke deliberately, such as when smoking or doing shisha
- Having relations with your spouse or being stimulated to ejaculate
- Vomiting a mouthful deliberately
- Deliberately swallowing a mouthful of vomit, even if you don't take it out deliberately
- Having an endoscopy (being inspected by a camera passed down your foodpipe)
- When a woman begins her menstruation or post-natal bleeding

The following will not break the fast:

- Eating, drinking or having relations with your spouse whilst forgetting that you're fasting
  - However, if you thought your fast broke, and then ate deliberately, your fast will now break
- To have nocturnal emission (a wet dream)
- Swallowing your own saliva or the wetness left in your mouth after rinsing it
- Ear drops
- Eye drops and *Surma (Kuhl)*
- Swallowing mucus from the throat or nose
- Inhaling smoke or dust unintentionally
- Using nicotine patches or applying external creams, or deodorants, makeup, oil etc.
- Injections, blood transfusions, dialysis and being on a drip
- Blood test or cupping
- Using the *Miswak* or swallowing the built-up saliva from using the *Miswak* (though flavoured *Miswaks* will break the fast if the saliva is swallowed)
- Vomiting unintentionally, or less than a mouthful intentionally
- Swallowing vomit unintentionally if it's a mouthful

The following will not break the fast either, but are *Makruh* and should be avoided:

- Chewing anything
  - If you chew something that has a taste, like chewing gum, and the taste mixes with the saliva, then swallowing the saliva will break your fast)
- Tasting food or drink without a need
- Gathering saliva and then swallowing it
- Brushing your teeth using toothpaste or using mouthwash (note that your fast breaks if you swallow either)

# QADA AND KAFFARAH

As mentioned earlier, breaking a fast early, whether accidentally or on purpose, renders your fast invalid. In a Hadith, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

**Whoever misses a day of fasting in Ramadan without a concession or an illness, he will not be able to make up for even if he were to fast forever. (Tirmidhi)**

مَنْ أَفْطَرَ يَوْمًا مِنْ رَمَضَانَ مِنْ غَيْرِ رُخْصَةٍ وَلَا مَرَضٍ، لَمْ يَقْضِ عَنْهُ صَوْمُ الدَّهْرِ كُلِّهِ وَإِنْ صَامَهُ

Therefore, we should be wary about those things that break our fasts and try our best to avoid them, as the reward we'll lose will be immense.

If our fast does break and become invalid, ideally we should continue to avoid eating and drinking as though we are fasting. Not only will this continue with the spirit of Ramadan for everyone, and also encourage others to continue their fast, it may also be that our fast wasn't in fact broken and we had wrongly assumed that it was. By not eating, we may preserve our fast and its reward.

However, if someone does do one of the actions mentioned earlier that render the fast invalid, they will have to make up for it later. This is called a Qada fast. They will have to make up this fast after Ramadan, though there are five days in the year in which we can't keep this Qada fast (along with the days of Ramadan):

1. The two Eid days
2. The three days after *Eid al-Adha* (known as the *Ayyam al-Tashriq*)

If a person breaks their fast specifically in the following ways:

- Eats or drinks deliberately whilst being aware that they are fasting without having a valid reason to do so
- Engages in sexual intercourse whether or not there is ejaculation whilst being aware that they are fasting

In such cases, a *Kaffarah* will be necessary too. *Kaffarah* is a penalty and a punishment for violating the command of Allah Ta'ala to fast for the entire duration of fasting. It's a deterrent to discourage anyone from breaking their fast.

The *Kaffarah* penalty requires the person who broke their fast to primarily fast for sixty days consecutively along with the *Qada* for the original broken fast. The *Qada* doesn't need to be with the consecutive days though. If during the sixty day period, they miss a fast, they must begin the sixty days again.

If they can't fast for that long due to weakness or an illness, they can either feed the poor or pay for their food in one of the following ways:

- Feed sixty poor people two full meals a day
- Feed one poor person two meals a day for sixty days

Nowadays, charity websites already calculate *Kaffarah* costs, so there may not be a need for calculating, unless you're personally organising the feeding in a poor area. Note that you can't choose which *Kaffarah* you want to give. You must primarily fast, and only give charity if you can't fast.

# ETIQUETTES OF FASTING

Fasting is an obligation, and to remove the obligation from your responsibility, all you have to do is avoid eating, drinking and relations from dawn to sunset. However, this is just the legal aspect. The fast itself is spiritual and holds many blessings.

In order to gain these blessings, you have to ensure you do the following:

- You must avoid sinning. The whole idea of fasting is to create discipline and abstinence from sins. If we sin throughout our fasts, though the obligation is lifted and we won't be accountable for it on the Day of Judgement, the fast itself will be of no other use. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ says:

**Whoever doesn't avoid dishonesty and acting on falsehood, Allah has no need for him to leave his food and drink. (Bukhari)**

مَنْ لَمْ يَدَعْ قَوْلَ الزُّورِ وَالْعَمَلَ بِهِ، فَلَيْسَ لِلَّهِ  
حَاجَةٌ فِي أَنْ يَدَعَ طَعَامَهُ وَشَرَابَهُ

**How many people are there whose fasts are nothing but thirst, and how many people are there who perform nightly prayers yet their praying is nothing but staying awake. (Darami)**

كَمْ مِنْ صَائِمٍ لَيْسَ لَهُ مِنْ صِيَامِهِ إِلَّا الظَّمُّ، وَكَمْ  
مِنْ قَائِمٍ لَيْسَ لَهُ مِنْ قِيَامِهِ إِلَّا السَّهَرُ

We can see from these stern Hadiths how sinning whilst fasting leaves you with no reward—it's like staying hungry for nothing. We're aware of the rewards for fasting and we can't afford to lose them.

Another thing to avoid is arguing. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ teaches us:

**When someone fasts on a day, he shouldn't be vulgar, nor wrong others. If someone insults him or tries to fight him, he should say, "I'm fasting. I'm fasting." (Muslim)**

إِذَا أَصْبَحَ أَحَدُكُمْ يَوْمًا صَائِمًا، فَلَا يَرْفُثُ وَلَا  
يَجْهَلُ، فَإِنْ امْرُؤٌ شَاتَمَهُ أَوْ قَاتَلَهُ، فَلْيَقُلْ: إِنِّي  
صَائِمٌ، إِنِّي صَائِمٌ

Not only is quarrelling usually pointless and violent, it takes away the spirit of fasting. After a dispute, both sides normally remain preoccupied with the other party and will find it difficult to focus on Allah Ta'ala and other important matters.

Lastly, when fasting, because of remnant food and because of the emptiness of your stomach, your mouth may produce an odour. It can be combated by regularly brushing your teeth and tongue with a *Miswak*. However, you should avoid brushing your teeth with toothpaste and using mouthwash, as they could potentially break your fast.

Plus, the smell isn't something to worry about, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

**The smell from the mouth of a person fasting is more fragrant to Allah than the scent of Musk. (Bukhari)**

لَخُلُوفٌ فَمِ الصَّائِمِ أَطْيَبُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ رِيحِ الْمِسْكِ

# TIPS FOR FASTING

Fasting can be tough, especially with work and school. This is why it's important to make it as easy as possible. You may feel hungry, but avoid complaining if you can help it, as it's *Makruh*, as it's like complaining about Allah Ta'ala's commands. Think about why you are fasting, the benefit you'll have and how Allah Ta'ala is pleased with you.

To make the fast easier, do the following:

- Rest as much as possible. Avoid strenuous activity, as it will burn you out. If you have an exercise routine, reduce it. If you can, take off your Ramadan from work, or at least for the last ten days.
- Sleep if you feel tired. Since you are eating less, you'll feel more sleepy and may require an extra hour or more of sleep a day. Try to fit in the *Qaylula* (*Sunnah* afternoon nap) after the *Zuhr Salah* if you have the time. However, avoid sleeping between the 'Asr and Magrib *Salahs*, as that period is an important part of the day for remembering Allah Ta'ala and making *Du'a*. Under no circumstances should you miss any *Salah* because of sleeping!
- If you feel thirsty, have a shower. It's the *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to pour water over himself when he would be thirsty whilst fasting or when feeling hot (Abu Dawud).
- Use the *Miswak* regularly to avoid mouth odour. Brush when you wake up, during *Wudu* and any other time you feel that your mouth odour may have changed. Regularly trim your *Miswak* when the flavour wears out.
- Properly eating and maintaining your hydration is key to feeling energetic. Drink plenty of water between *Iftar* and *Suhur*, and ensure you eat the correct foods.

# IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF RAMADAN

TARAWIH

*Tarawih* is a prayer only performed in Ramadan. It's twenty *Rak'ats* in total split into sets of twos.

Most *Masajid* try to complete the recitation of the entire Noble Qur'an during *Tarawih*. For this reason, it may take a long time—up to one and a half hours!

For those who can't pray in the *Masjid*, or if the congregation doesn't have an Imam to lead them, then in each *rak'ah* of the twenty *raka'ahs*, you should read one *Surah* starting from *Sural Fil* and ending at *Surah Nas*, which are ten in total. This means that you will recite each *Surah* twice in the entire twenty *Raka'ahs*.

Originally, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would pray *Tarawih* alone in the *Masjid* in a makeshift room he had made to seclude himself after leading the *Fard* of *'Isha Salah*. The *Sahaba* (*Radiya'Llahu 'anhum*) noticed this, and began praying behind him. This happened on the second day too. This was their *Tarawih* congregation.

However, on the third day, they couldn't hear him praying aloud as he had been praying on the first two days, and tried to find out why. He informed them that he had decided to pray *Tarawih* alone from then on, as he feared that whilst he was alive, there was a chance of *Tarawih* becoming compulsory upon them to pray if they carried on doing it with him. He instead instructed them to pray on their own in their houses.

After his demise, and after the two years of Abu Bakr (Radiya'Llahu 'anh)'s *khilafah* that were filled with difficulties, 'Umar (Radiya'Llahu 'anh) decided that there would be no harm for people to pray *Tarawih* in congregation anymore, since it can no longer become compulsory. In fact, it was more beneficial, as there was a greater chance people would pray if it were in a group, especially in the month of Ramadan when the benefits are unmissable. Therefore, the *Tarawih* was reverted back to being prayed as a gathering.

Since then, until now, we have prayed twenty *raka'ats* in congregation in Masajid during Ramadan. It's a brilliant way to get close to Allah Ta'ala. Throughout the day, you sacrifice your food to please Him, and at night you sacrifice your sleep for Him.

LAYLATU 'L-QADR

**We have sent the Qur'an down in the Night of Qadr (Power). What can tell you (exactly) what the Night of Qadr is? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. (Surah al-Qadr 97:1-3)**

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ (1) وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ  
الْقَدْرِ (2) لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ (3)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ once narrated to the Sahaba (Radiya'Llahu 'anhum) about a man from a previous nation who was able to fight for the sake of Allah Ta'ala for a thousand months. The Sahaba (Radiya'Llahu 'anhum) were amazed and could only wish for the same reward.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ then prayed to Allah Ta'ala for such a reward for his Sahaba (Radiya'Llahu 'anhum) and he was informed about the *Laylatu 'l-Qadr* and its exact date. In that night, any good deed performed would equal to performing the same deed for a thousand months. In years, it numbers to over eighty-three years, or if you assume one month is thirty days, it equals thirty thousand days! In other words, two *Raka'ahs* of *Salah* equal to praying thirty thousand full two *Raka'ah Salahs*! One pound given in charity on this night equals to giving thirty thousand pounds!

This is what makes this night unmissable, and we would have known its precise date, but something happened. Unfortunately, whilst on the way to inform the Sahaba (Radiya'Llahu 'anhum) about this special night, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ came across two Sahaba (Radiya'Llahu 'anhum) quarrelling. In the process of calming them both, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ regrettably forgot which date exactly it was.

What he did tell us is clues that he remembered, such as the night's being in the last ten nights of Ramadan, and even more specifically that it may be an odd night. This is the best estimate we have, and it's for this reason that many perform *I'tikaf* to guarantee themselves that they will be worshipping Allah Ta'ala as much as they can on that night.

The wisdom behind the Messenger of Allah ﷺ being made to forget is that this now enables us to worship Allah Ta'ala more in the last ten nights, as we don't know which night is the correct night.

Though many people will claim it's the twenty-seventh night, there is no definitive proof, and we shouldn't focus all our charity and worship on just that one night.

As for what we can do on this night, we should engage ourselves in as much worship as possible, even if it means losing our sleep and catching up on it in the day (this is why it's worth taking these days off especially). We can sleep again after *Fajr Salah* as the night is technically over by then, and the rewards are no longer available.

If we can't stay up the entire night, the least we can do is a little more than usual. If we normally don't pray *Tahajjud*, we should pray just two *Raka'ahs* in the night before *Fajr*.

As for reciting the Noble Qur'an, we could even pray just a quarter *Juz* more, or a half, or an entire *Juz* if we are ambitious.

As for other worship, we should increase all of our daily *Dhikr* we do (more on this will come later in the presentation).

We should also make a point of donating more money on the last ten nights than other nights. Donating just one pound could equal to thirty thousand pounds!

Lastly, we should read the following *Du'a* taught to our mother 'A'isha (Radiya'Llahu 'anha) by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to specifically read on this night:

**O' Allah, You are the forgiving, and you love forgiving others, so do forgive me. (Tirmidhi)**

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ عَفُوفٌ يُحِبُّ الْعَفْوَ فَاعْفُ عَنِّي

I'TIKAF

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would seclude himself in the Masjid Nabawi in the last ten days of Ramadan. This was because the *Laylatu 'l-Qadr* has been reported to be in the last ten nights, and by ensuring you stay in the Masjid throughout all ten nights, you can guarantee yourself getting the chance to worship Allah Ta'ala in it.

In the same way, it's *Sunnah* for us to do the same in the last ten days. Since Islamically a day starts from *Maghrib Salah*, we will have to be inside the Masjid from a little before (for example from the 'Asr of the 20<sup>th</sup> day) to ensure we are there for the duration of ten days. The *I'tikaf* ends as soon as Ramadan ends, even if it is just after nine days.

There are some rules regarding *I'tikaf* for it to be valid:

- The person in *I'tikaf* needs to fast all ten days.
- They can't leave the designated area of the Masjid without a valid reason. The only reason the person can leave is for a need, such as the need to perform *Ghusl*, *Wudu* or relieving themselves. They shouldn't be going to have showers unnecessarily.
- If the Masjid has a prayer hall, and its foyer isn't regarded as part of the Masjid, it won't be permissible for the person to leave the hall into the foyer.
- Even when leaving the boundaries of the prayer area for a need, the person should hasten to return back and avoid talking to others. If they delay, their *I'tikaf* will break.
- If a person leaves the designated area, their *I'tikaf* will be invalid and they will be required to keep it again in a future Ramadan.

## ***Nafil I'tikaf***

If a person can't do *I'tikaf* for the complete ten days, they should at least try to do it for a few days throughout Ramadan. In fact, it can be done any time of the year and even when you come for *Salah*, you can just make an intention for *I'tikaf* and you will automatically receive its reward,

Just as in the *Sunnah I'tikaf*, a person isn't allowed to unnecessarily leave the Masjid boundaries, the same applies for a *Nafil I'tikaf*. However, the difference is that if a person leaves the Masjid in a *Nafil I'tikaf*, their *I'tikaf* will come to an end, rather than breaking. They will not have to make up for anything, but will receive the reward for as long as they stayed.

## ***I'tikaf for Women***

Women too can perform *I'tikaf*, but can only do so within their house. They can choose a room, or a place inside a room, in which they will decide to remain for the last ten days, following the same rules as men.

Note that since fasting was a condition, she can't do *I'tikaf* if she is in her state of menstruation or post-natal bleeding.

## **Etiquettes of *I'tikaf***

Whilst in *I'tikaf*, the person should use as much time as possible in any form of worship, whether it is praying *Nawafil Salah*, reciting the Noble Qur'an, doing *dhikr*, or even learning and teaching others about Islam in any way.

## ***Makruh* acts in *I'tikaf***

It's disliked to do the following in *I'tikaf*:

- Sitting in silence and being idle
- Causing difficulty to others in any way, such as sleeping or resting in an inappropriate place or way, praying loudly when others are asleep etc.
- Talking about worldly things, or spending time doing worldly things, such as business, playing on your phone etc.

To avoid the last two reasons, avoid bringing your phone with you, as it will just distract you from concentrating on Allah Ta'ala.

# ACTS OF WORSHIP TO DO IN RAMADAN

SALAH

*Salah* is our strongest connection with Allah Ta'ala. It's a way of reminding our selves that Allah Ta'ala exists, the favours He has done on us and how we need to make Him our focal point in life.

The five daily *Salahs* are already compulsory—in fact, we get seventy times the amount of reward for praying them in Ramadan. If someone doesn't have a habit of praying them already, this month should be the ideal moment they start.

Not only is it easier because of the absence of the *Shayatin* and the effect of fasting and going against our desires, but everything becomes collective in Ramadan. We go *Fajr* together, as it's right after *Suhur*; we pray *Tarawih* together; and we get to even break fasts together in the *Masjid*. We all are trying to improve ourselves, and there is no better time than to start in Ramadan.

Ideally, we should be praying in the *Masjid* too. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ greatly emphasised for us to pray together in *Masajid*, and he would become upset when someone nearby didn't come to join them in the *Masjid* without valid reasons. We should remind ourselves that the *Masjid* is the House of Allah Ta'ala, our Creator, Our Provider, Our Sustainer, and the One who looks after us and fulfils our needs. We should visit him whenever He asks us to, and five times a day is not much to ask, especially as all the *Salahs* are spaced out throughout the day.

If we already have a habit of praying all the *Salahs*, then we should always be finding ways to upgrade our *Salah*, just as we upgrade everything else in life, whether it's our houses, our cars, our phones and every our clothes.

Here are some ways to improve your *Salah* in order of priority:

1. Pray each *Fard Salah* on time
2. Pray each *Fard Salah* in the Masjid
3. Pray the *Sunnah Mu'akkadahs* before and after their respective *Salahs*
  - 2 before Fajr
  - 4 before Zuhr and 2 after it
  - 2 after Maghrib
  - 2 after 'Isha
4. Pray the *Sunnah Ghayr Mu'akkadahs* before their respective *Salahs*
  - Either 2 or 4 before 'Asr
  - Either 2 or 4 before 'Isha

5. Pray your *Salahs* with the first *takbir*, i.e. being there in the rows when the Imam starts the *Salah*, without missing any *Rak'ahs*
6. Praying in the first *Saff* (row)
7. Praying other *Nawafil Salah*
  - The *Nawafil Salah* for *Zuhr*, *Maghrib* and *'Isha*
  - *Tahajjud* – more detail on the next slide
  - *Ishraq* – At least two *Rak'ahs* immediately after sunrise
  - *Duha* – At least two *Rak'ahs* after mid-morning but before *Zuhr* time.
  - *Awwabin* – A total of Six *Rak'ahs* in sets of two *Rak'ahs* prayed after the *Maghrib Fard*. You can count the two *Rak'ahs* of *Maghrib Sunnah* as part of the six.
  - *Salatu 'l-Hajah* – Two *Rak'ahs* to be prayed when there's a need you wanted to ask from Allah Ta'ala
  - *Salatu 't-Tawbah* – Two *Rak'ahs* to be prayed when you want to seek forgiveness for a major sin
  - *Tahiyyatu 'l-Masjid* – Two *Rak'ahs* to be prayed when you enter a *Masjid* before sitting down, as a way of greeting Allah Ta'ala. If you don't have time for it, you can intend whichever other *Salah* you're praying first in the *Masjid* as *Tahiyyatu 'l-Masjid* as long as you haven't sat down.
  - *Tahiyyatu 'l-Wudu* – Two *Rak'ahs* to be prayed after finishing *Wudu*
8. Praying with as much concentration as you can, focusing on Allah Ta'ala watching you. This will be challenging and you may need further advice from a qualified Shaykh.

## The Importance of *Tahajjud Salah*

*Tahajjud Salah* is one of the greatest *Salahs* you can perform. It's a *Salah* for showing your love and sacrifice for Allah Ta'ala. You give up your sleep and comfort for His sake, meeting Him and speaking with Him at a time when the majority of the country is asleep. This is the best time of the day to focus on Allah Ta'ala, especially as your mind will be clearer if you have woken up after a few hours of sleep and you will have finished with your daily responsibilities.

Scholars explain that it's extremely difficult to become a *Wali* (close friend) of Allah Ta'ala if you don't pray *Tahajjud*, as it has always been a common trait between all of the friends of Allah Ta'ala in the past that they prayed *Tahajjud*.

Ramadan is the most appropriate month to be praying *Tahajjud*, as it's the month of connecting with Allah Ta'ala and asking for His friendship. It's even easier as we're usually awake at that time having *Suhur* anyway

Before having your *Suhur*, take out some time to pray *Tahajjud Salah* followed by five minutes of *Du'a*. In total, it may not be more than ten minutes. Pray the *Salah* slowly and calmly, making your *Ruku'* and *Sujud* longer than usual. Try to pray lengthy portions of the Noble Qur'an if you can. When you finish, sit for the five minutes and make *Du'a* for everything you want, especially forgiveness and Allah Ta'ala's friendship.

It's important to pray your *Tahajjud* first along with a *Du'a*, and then doing your *Suhur*, as the *Tahajjud* will be rushed otherwise. It's more rewarding to delay your *Suhur* to the ending time.

Lastly, if you have any *Salahs* that you've missed out in your life, it's a good idea to make a start to pray them this month. These are called the *Qada Salahs*

Calculating how many of each *Salahs* you have missed is a daunting task. However, once it is done and recorded, it's easier to keep track of it. To calculate the missed *Salahs* consider the following:

- There are five *Salahs* in a day (six if you include the *Witr* of *'Isha*). If there are 365 days in a year, you will need to pray 365 of each *Salah* for every year that you have missed.
- You may have prayed *Jumu'ahs* every week, so since there are 52 weeks in a year, you can subtract 52 *Zuhrs* for every year.
- In the previous years, you may have prayed your *Salahs* for a duration. For example, in Ramadan you may have prayed all your *Salahs*, or at least *Maghrib* and *'Isha*, as many break their fast in the *Masjid*, and pray *Tarawih* in Ramadan. Subtract thirty of each from your total for every year.
- You may have also prayed some additional *Salahs* in workplaces or schools. Try to calculate these and subtract them from the total.

The total you'll have will still be a large number, maybe thousands! However, you shouldn't feel despondent. The scholars explain that even if we show to Allah Ta'ala that we're making an effort by praying just one of each *Salah* a day, we will be forgiven for missing them.

Try to pray at least one of each after every *Salah*. However, avoid praying them in front of others—especially after *Fajr* and *'Asr* as these *Salahs* have no *Sunnah* prayers afterwards, and it will be obvious to others that you're praying *Qada*. Revealing your sins of missing past *Salahs* is also a sin!

RECITING THE NOBLE  
QUR'AN

The Noble Qur'an is Allah Ta'ala's words and His message to mankind. It's His instructions for us on how we need to live our lives in a way that both pleases Him and keeps us safe in both worlds. It's His directions on how we can reach heaven easily and avoid the pitfalls of the *Shaytan*, this world and hell.

The Noble Qur'an is vital to connect with Allah Ta'ala outside of the month of Ramadan already, and in the month of Ramadan, it's indispensable. Allah Ta'ala Himself mentioned the connection between Ramadan and the Noble Qur'an, showing us the importance of pairing the two.

The Noble Qur'an has many rights over us. We need to:

- Read it correctly and regularly
- Memorise the necessary parts of it
- Understand its meanings
- Reflect over its meanings and verses
- Act upon its teachings

In the month of Ramadan, we should be trying to do all of the above five things throughout the entire month.

## The First Right of the Noble Qur'an: Recitation

Firstly, we need to recite it as much as possible and as often as possible, and for this, targets are a must. However, what's important is not how much we read, but how often and how many hours of our day go into it. There are people who can read an entire *Juz* in fifteen minutes, though some only manage it in an hour. However, we should be ambitious and try to complete at least one entire recitation within the month.

If we haven't recited much in the past, we should set ourselves an easier target of reading just one *Juz* daily. We should calculate how long it takes for us to recite one *Juz*, and divide that time throughout the day. For example, if it takes us an hour to read one *Juz*, we can read fifteen minutes at four points throughout the day.

One trick is reaching the Masjid ten minutes early before *Salahs* and staying behind ten minutes after *Salah* too. This should be enough time for a person to read at least 1 hour and 40 minutes of reading a day. Reading in the Masjid will be easier for most people, especially with the environment of everyone reading together.

See the table on the next page to figure out how long you need to read daily to achieve the number of *Khatms* (complete recitations) of the Noble Qur'an you want to achieve. The key is setting a target and making a plan of when you'll be reciting to reach the required daily praying time. If we had a target last year, we should be trying to improve the target for this year. Note that in the table, the maximum amount of time displayed is around three hours of daily recitation, though you can always pray more. If you're really ambitious, you can aim to complete the entire Noble Qur'an in just one day! If you can read one *Juz* in twenty minutes, it only takes ten hours of reading time!

	Number of <i>Khatms</i> you want to achieve						
Time taken to read one Juz	1	2	3	4	5	7	10
20 minutes	20 mins	40 mins	1 hour	1h 20m	1h 40m	2 hours	3h 20m
25 minutes	25 mins	50 mins	1h 15m	1h 40m	2h 5m	2h 55m	-
30 minutes	30 mins	1 hour	1h 30m	2 hours	2h 30m	-	-
35 minutes	35 min	1h 10m	1h 45m	2h 20m	-	-	-
40 minutes	40 min	1h 20m	2 hours	2h 40m	-	-	-
45 minutes	45 mins	1h 30m	2h 15m	-	-	-	-
1 hour	1 hour	2 hours	3 hours	-	-	-	-

Along with reciting the Noble Qur'an frequently, it can't be stressed enough how important it is to recite it correctly. Reciting it correctly requires you to pray it with the following:

- The correct pronunciation of each letter (*Makharij*)
- With *Tajwid* rules
- Praying in a clear manner in which every is said properly without rushing
- Preferably in a "tune"

In fact, it's more rewarding to read a smaller amount properly than rushing through a larger amount. Therefore, choose the time it takes you to read one *Juz* in the previous table based on how long it would take if you were to read it clearly.

If you haven't yet learnt *Tajwid*, or your *Makharij* are not up to scratch, you should take this month to learn from qualified teachers. Ask your local Imam and Masjid leaders to organise something, as there will most definitely be others in the same position. It's the Masjid officials' duty to ensure there is some sort of service available, even if it means it's a paid service.

Along with reading the *Khatm* amount daily, we should also add the following *Surahs* into our reading schedule:

- Surah Yasin – 22<sup>nd</sup> Juz – to be prayed in the morning
- Surah Mulk – 29<sup>th</sup> Juz – to be prayed at any time in the night
- Surah Waqi'ah – 27<sup>th</sup> Juz – to be prayed at any time in the night
- Surah Alif Lam Mim Sajdah – 21<sup>st</sup> Juz – to be prayed at any time in the night
- Surah Kahf – 15<sup>th</sup> Juz – to be prayed at any time from the Maghrib of Thursday to before the Maghrib of Friday.
- Surah Dukhan – 25<sup>th</sup> Juz – to be prayed at any time from the Maghrib of Thursday some time in the night before the *Fajr* of Friday.

As mentioned earlier, all of this will require a timetable if you want to effectively manage your time!

## The Second Right of the Noble Qur'an – Memorisation

It's compulsory on every Muslim to memorise enough of the Noble Qur'an that allows them to pray their *Salah* correctly. However, we should always be trying to store more of Allah Ta'ala's words in our hearts and not be content with just the last few *Surahs*.

Here is a list of the different parts of the Noble Qur'an we should aim to memorise in order of priority:

1. A small portion of the 30<sup>th</sup> Juz (*Surah Fil – Surah Nas*)
2. A large portion of the 30<sup>th</sup> Juz (*Surah Duha – Surah Nas*)
3. Surah Yasin
4. Surah Mulk
5. Surah Waqi'ah
6. Surah Alif Lam Mim Sajdah
7. The entire 30<sup>th</sup> Juz
8. Begin *Hifz* from the 1<sup>st</sup> Juz

We should set aside at least half an hour a day for memorisation and going over what we have already memorised. Ideally, consult a scholar for a more detailed plan and help on memorisation. If we are already a *Hafiz* of the Noble Qur'an, we should try to recite at least three *Juz* daily for revision (*Dor*).

### **The Third Right of the Noble Qur'an – Understanding its Meanings**

Reciting the Noble Qur'an is indeed a noble task, but a Muslim shouldn't become stagnant and believe that recitation is sufficient for them. Every Muslim should yearn to understand the Noble Qur'an and the words of Allah Ta'ala. Though knowing the Arabic of the Noble Qur'an would have been ideal, it's may not be practical for all Muslims to take time out to learn it unfortunately.

However, they should still try to sit in gatherings in which the meanings of the Noble Qur'an are taught, whether it's a small course being offered online or in person, or there's a gathering in your local Masjid, or there's a book on the meanings written by a reliable scholar, or even Youtube lectures of a qualified speaker. Before choosing the book or listening to online lectures, consult your local Imam for any recommendations. However, the best and most beneficial method is sitting in a gathering yourself and hearing it live from the scholar, just as it was meant to be and has been learnt since the time of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

### **The Fourth Right of the Noble Qur'an – Reflecting over its Meanings**

The Noble Qur'an has clear straightforward messages, but those who ponder over them will realise their depths and take their intended effects. By sitting in gatherings like above, you'll get a chance to ponder over the meanings already with a qualified scholar, but reminding yourself of the verses when alone may be helpful otherwise, especially the verses that ask you to observe things, such as the intricacies of the creation of Allah Ta'ala, how Allah Ta'ala has absolute power and control, the traits of our human nature, amongst other things. The more we contemplate over the Noble Qur'an, the more we will understand Allah Ta'ala and what He expects from us. We just have to be careful not to try and take out meanings ourselves unless we have studied it with qualified scholars first.

## **The Fifth Right of the Noble Qur'an – Acting Upon It**

After learning the meanings and teachings of the Noble Qur'an, it should become easier to know what it expects from us. Now is the real test: whenever we remember something we have learnt, whether from previous knowledge, or from a new lesson, we must try to bring it into our lives.

For example, if we learn about the importance of spending in charity, we should spend at least a little bit that moment. If we learn the importance of avoiding think of others, we should try to stop that very moment. If we learn about human flaws, such as pride, greed etc. we should see in ourselves whether we are suffering from this flaw and try to eradicate it. Only by this introspection and self-examination will we be able to fully act on the Noble Qur'an.

This was really the main purpose of the Noble Qur'an: to change us into better human beings.

DHIKR AND GENERAL  
REMEMBRANCE OF ALLAH  
TA'ALA

We learnt earlier that every moment of the month of Ramadan is priceless and it's even possible that one second is more valuable than all of the seconds out of Ramadan.

For this reason, we have to always engage ourselves in some sort of beneficial activity for the sake of Allah Ta'ala, whether it's physical worship, such as *Salah* or verbal worship, such as recitation.

One great way to make the most of Ramadan is remembering Allah Ta'ala through the *Dhikr* we have been taught in the Noble Qur'an and the Hadith.

*Dhikr* literally means "remembering Allah Ta'ala" and it can be through many ways, whether it's making *Du'a*, praying certain phrases of *Dhikr* or even thinking and talking about Him. The key is to bring Him to the front of your mind as much as possible. Not only will this be rewarding, but it will distract yourself from thoughts of committing sins. It will create a bond between you and Allah Ta'ala.

There are many ways to remember Allah throughout your day:

- You can recite the phrase we learnt earlier:

**There is no God besides Allah. I seek Allah's forgiveness. O' Allah, I ask you for Jannah and I ask for your protection from the Fire.**

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي  
أَسْأَلُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ النَّارِ

- We can also pray the First Kalimah frequently

**There is no God besides Allah.**

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

- We can also pray the Third Kalimah frequently

**Pure is Allah, and all praise belongs to Him. There's no God besides Allah. Allah is the greatest. There is no power and no strength (for us) but with Allah, the High, the Great.**

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ

- We can do *Istigfar* and ask for forgiveness using the simple phrase “*Astagfiru'Llah*”, or the more comprehensive phrase:

**I seek the forgiveness of Allah, my Lord, from every sin and I turn in repentance to Him.**

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ رَبِّي مِنْ كُلِّ ذَنْبٍ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ

For the last three phrases (the First Kalimah, the Third Kalimah and *Istigfar*) we should set for ourselves daily targets, whether it's reciting each one ten, twenty, fifty or preferably one hundred times daily.

A target of one hundred would be ideal to begin with. Though the Third Kalimah may take longer, the other two will not take more than five minutes each. However, the effect and reward of reciting these will be huge.

Scholars also recommend to us to remember the Messenger of Allah ﷺ throughout this month by praying *Salawat* upon Him. There are countless benefits of reciting *Salawat* upon Him, with one important one being that Allah Ta'ala will be pleased with us. We also owe it to him for being the means of guiding us. In fact, more or less everything in this presentation we have learnt so far has been from his teachings! This is why we should thank him by sending *Salawat* upon him daily.

There are many phrases you can choose, such as the simple:

**May Allah send blessings and peace upon him**

صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

Another short one is the one below. It's more rewarding to use this phrase as it was one of the phrases instructed to us by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to use :

**May Allah send blessings upon the unlettered prophet**

وَصَلَّى اللهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ الْأُمِّيِّ

However, we can derive from the Hadiths that the best phrase for *Salawat* we can recite, is the *Salawat Ibrahim*, the one we recite in *Salah* after *Tashahhud*. Though it's lengthy, we should recite it once in a while at least.

We should aim for reciting *Salawat* three hundred times a day. It would take less than five minutes in total if we use the above short phrases!

One highly effective way to constantly remember Allah Ta'ala—and in a way that would be relevant to our lives too—is praying the *Sunnah Du'as* we have been taught by His Messenger ﷺ. There is more or less a *Du'a* for every occasion. We may have learnt many of them from before in Madrasah, but there are many books available with *Du'as* for their different occasions. Consult your local Imam or scholar for recommendations on which books you could use.

However, the following *Du'as* will be the ones we use most frequently throughout our days, and we should make a point of reciting them with their meanings in mind. We can even print them out and stick them at their relevant points to remind us!

Waking up	Saying In Sha Allah	Entering the Masjid	“Inna li’Llah...” at bad moments	Replying to Adhan
Going to sleep	Entering the washroom	Leaving the Masjid	Entering the market / shopping	After Adhan
Before eating	Leaving the washroom	Ma Sha Allah at good things	Getting dressed	After sneezing
After eating	Leaving home	Al-Hamduli’Llah at achievements	Breaking fast	Travelling
Saying Jazaka’Llah Khayran	Entering home	Subhana’Llah when surprised	Starting things with Bismi’Llah	When ascending / descending

DU' A

Allah Ta'ala talks about fasting and Ramadan in *Surah al-Baqarah*. In the middle of this discussion, Allah Ta'ala mentions a very interesting verse:

**If my servant asks you (O' Muhammad) about Me, then I (say) I am indeed near. I answer those who call whenever they call me. (Surah al-Baqarah 2:186)**

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ  
أَجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ

The scholars explain that the significance of adding this verse in the middle of the discussion of Ramadan is to signify how Ramadan is the month of calling Allah Ta'ala and making *Du'a* to Him as much as possible. It's the best time to ask for what we want.

From the verse, we learn that Allah Ta'ala does hear us whenever we call Him and He does indeed respond. Though we don't see the response, he definitely does answer and grant us something, though it may not be what we asked for, but what's best for us. He knows what would benefit us more: whether we get what we asked for, or whether He gives us something else which is better for us.

Therefore, our job is to keep asking throughout Ramadan for any needs we have, without expecting that we will get exactly what we ask for, but with the hope that we will surely get the best for asking.

When making *Du'a*, there are specific times we should choose to ask and etiquettes we should follow.

As for the times that are best to ask:

- After the *Fard Salahs*
- After acts of worship
- At *Suhur* time
- After praying *Tahajjud* especially
- Just before breaking your fast
- Whenever you feel the difficulty of fasting
- Whenever you experience difficulty or need something
- Between the *Adhan* and *Iqamah* of all the *Salahs*
- In the *Sajdah* of *Sunnah* and *Nafil Salahs* (though the *Du'as* should be said using the *Sunnah Du'as* or verses of the Noble Qur'an)

As for the etiquettes of making *Du'as*:

- Be in the state of *Wudu*
- Do an act of worship first, such as *Nafil Salah*, recitation of the Noble Qur'an, sending *Salawat* upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, doing *Dhikr* of any kind, giving some money into charity etc.

- Sit in the *Tashahhud* position ideally and facing the *Qiblah*
- Raise your hands so that the palms are facing towards you and slightly upwards. Keep your hands in line with your chest and with a slight gap inbetween with your fingers in a natural position
- Begin by praising Allah Ta'ala first with whichever phrases you know, even if it's Surah al-Fatihah!
- Follow this with *Salawat* upon His Messenger ﷺ using whichever phrases you prefer
- Ask for forgiveness using verses of the Noble Qur'an or other phrases from the Hadiths
- And now ask for your needs. As mentioned earlier, ask for yourself, your family, your education, your career, anything you need help with, pray for heaven, for salvation from hell, pray for those who are sick and those who have gone, pray for your teachers, and pray for Allah Ta'ala to accept your fast and Ramadan, and to allow you to continue your change beyond Ramadan.
- When you finish, send *Salawat* upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ again and end with the following:

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ وَآخِرُ دَعْوَانَا أَنْ  
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ بِرَحْمَتِكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ آمِينَ

- And then pass your hands over your face.
- Du'as are also more readily accepted if you shed some tears, even if you have to pretend to cry. Allah Ta'ala is Merciful and even shows mercy to someone who pretends to cry.

Another effective way to making *Du'a* is reading collections of *Sunnah Du'as* that have been gathered for daily reading. By reading these collections, you'll not only be asking for essential things that Nabi ﷺ regularly asked for, but you won't have to memorise or remember anything for specific times—all you have to do is open the book and read!

There are many famous collections, from which two popular ones are:

- Al-Hizbu 'I-A'zam – A lengthy collection of *Sunnah Du'as* divided into seven sections to be recited over seven days
- Munajat Maqbul – An abridgement of the above collection of *Du'as*, still divided into seven sections for reading over seven days

You'll also find smaller collections of *Du'as* that can be read every morning and evening. These are mainly for asking for protection and ease throughout your day. For recommendations, ask your local Imam or scholar.

CHARITY

Ramadan is a month of earning rewards, and one quick yet highly effective way to earn reward is by giving money into charitable avenues.

We have to always remind ourselves that our money is not truly our own. Allah Ta'ala has given it to us to see how we spend the money. We're fortunate that He hasn't prohibited us from spending it on ourselves, our comfort and our wishes. However, we should feel it's our duty to give back at least a small amount back.

Firstly, many people choose to give their *Zakah* in Ramadan to gain more rewards, but this may be a problem. *Zakah* is giving 2.5% of your total "Zakatable" wealth after a year has passed after having owned the minimum amount of wealth required for someone to have to pay *Zakah*.

For example, if the amount of wealth you need to have to be liable to pay *Zakah* is £300, and you have just gathered a total of £300 on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Ramadan 1445 AH (it has to be calculated using Islamic dates and not the Gregorian calendar dates), then after a whole year, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Ramadan next year, 1446 AH, you will have to give 2.5% of your total income at that moment.

However, if someone gathered a total of £300 on another date of the year, such as the 1<sup>st</sup> of Muharram 1445 AH, they can't wait until the Ramadan of the next year, but must give *Zakah* ideally on 1<sup>st</sup> of Muharram 1446 AH of the wealth they currently own. By delaying it to Ramadan, the calculations may become incorrect and they may be paying less than what they were supposed to.

This is why it's wrong for people to just "choose" the month of Ramadan for calculating their *Zakah* date, but they're supposed to find out the exact Islamic date, or at least approximate, when they began holding the minimum amount of wealth for *Zakah* to be necessary.

Another scenario we see is that a person correctly knows their *Zakah* date but it's out of Ramadan, and they calculate their *Zakah* value correctly too, however, they delay giving the actual *Zakah* money until Ramadan starts, as they feel they will receive more reward. Though this is technically valid, it too is a problem.

Though their eagerness to gain reward is praiseworthy, *Zakah* money should be given immediately so that the poor recipients can benefit from the money sooner. Leaving it late is like allowing people to starve for a few more months just for yourself to gain more reward! Therefore, *Zakah* should ideally be given as soon as its due date arrives.

As for giving other forms of charity in the month of Ramadan, we have many Hadiths that point to its importance. Along with the Hadiths mentioned before:

**The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was the most charitable of people, and he was most generous in Ramadan (Ahmad)**

كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَجْوَدَ  
النَّاسِ بِالْخَيْرِ، وَكَانَ أَجْوَدَ مَا يَكُونُ فِي رَمَضَانَ

**Whoever gives *Iftar* food to a person who fasts, or prepares a warrior for battle, he will have the same reward as them. (Bayhaqi)**

مَنْ فَطَرَ صَائِمًا، أَوْ جَهَّزَ غَازِيًا فَلَهُ مِثْلُ أَجْرِهِ

Not only are rewards multiplied in the month of Ramadan, but there are more opportunities to give to the poor too, as more people will be fasting and require food for *Iftar*.

Here are some ideas you can consider:

- Donate a large amount for *Iftar* food for people around the world using charities and online payment. Specifically choose the *Iftar* option so that the money is used solely for that and so that you get the reward of their fasts too!
- Donate an amount to *Masajid* if they buy *Iftar* for the *Musallis* to break their fasts with.
- Donate a fixed amount daily using websites that have systems allowing you to automatically donate an amount a day, such as £1, £5 etc.
- Personally donate every night into a charity, so that you can get the reward of spending in *Laylatu 'l-Qadr*, even if it's £1.
- Give money locally too, to local *Zakah* projects, your local *Masajid*, especially those that need funds for refurbishments and paying debts.
- Give money to local *Madaris* and Islamic institutes. Try to see if there's something specific they need or would benefit from and donate it.
- Give money for orphans, widows, teachers, students, water pumps and wells, medical care, disaster-stricken places etc. Be diverse rather than just selecting "most needy"!
- Donate to build *Masjids* abroad—not only are there less *Masajid* in some parts of the world, but they may be cheaper to build too! However, always remember that both are important and local ones will always cost more, as they will need to match local buildings.

- Be careful of giving money into money boxes—find out how often they are emptied and used, so that your money doesn't just lie around for the whole Ramadan but is used up! It may be a good idea to donate online to avoid this.
- Send money with reliable people abroad where you know there's a genuine need. Be careful of door-to-door charity collectors! They're not all genuine!
- Buy gifts for family, friends, neighbours and co-workers. Send food to their houses too. If you have Non-Muslim neighbours, make a point of sending with the food a card that informs them of the purpose of Ramadan and how Islam emphasises good relations with neighbours, or any other relevant morals.
- Set yourself a large target of how much you want to give in the whole month, as make sure it's spent. Set it aside from the first day so that you don't have second thoughts afterwards.
- Encourage your children to donate too by giving them an amount and either asking them to put it into a jar daily, or letting them choose where they want to give it.

# SUNNAH ACTS

Allah Ta'ala sent His Messenger ﷺ to show us how best to live our lives. It's a given fact then that the best way to please Allah Ta'ala would be to live a life as close to the *Sunnah* as possible.

In Ramadan and beyond, we should try to adopt the *Sunnah* life in as many ways as we can. Here are a few ideas:

- Praying the *Sunnah Mu'akkadah* and *Ghayr Mu'akkadah Salahs*
- Reading the *Sunnah Du'as* at their prescribed time
- Wearing clothes that resemble the *Sunnah*, such as the hat (*topi*), the *thobe* (*jubbah, kafni* etc.), the *'Imamah, khuffayn* etc.
- Growing a beard for men, and wearing the correct dress for women
- Doing good and clean things with the right hand, and things that require cleaning with the left
- Giving and taking things with the right hand
- Entering and exiting the home, Masjid, washroom and even vehicles with the correct foot first and leaving with the correct foot first.
- Using the *Miswak*
- Being kind, gentle and forgiving to others
- Helping others out, whether it's chores around the house, or helping a person in difficulty

# PREPARING FOR RAMADAN

Since there's a lot that needs to be done this Ramadan, you'll need to ensure you're as free as possible.

Firstly, recite the *Sunnah Du'a* in the two months before Ramadan, Rajab and Sha'ban. The *Du'a* below will allow you to ask Allah Ta'ala to help you prepare to make the most out of Ramadan:

**O' Allah, give us blessings in Rajab and Sha'ban, and allow us to reach Ramadan. (Musnad Bazzar)**

اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ لَنَا فِي رَجَبٍ وَشَعْبَانَ وَبَلِّغْنَا رَمَضَانَ

As for any preparation that needs to be made for the Ramadan itself, such as any frozen *Iftar* foods, it should be done before the month starts. It's unfair on mothers and sisters to be expected to cook as much as in Ramadan. Though its rewarding, they may be (and should be) aspirant of spending more time in worship too, which won't be possible if they have to spend hours cooking.

Rather, food can even be ordered from outside. In the past, scholars would give the females of their house more time to engage themselves in worship and have the food ordered instead, just so that their families don't miss out on the irreplaceable moments of worship.

Lastly, we need to give up any hobbies that are either futile, distracting or harmful for our spirituality. If we're in the habit of watching movies, listening to music, keeping up with TV shows, then these must be left immediately before the month begins.

However, if we have other pastimes, such as playing video games, bingeing on YouTube videos, or even reading novels, we have to stop these too, even if it's just for a month. All of the above have may not have spiritual benefit, nor may they give us any reward in the hereafter.

Similarly, we may be engrossed in social media, receiving notifications from groups and subscriptions that we can do without in the month of Ramadan. We can pause and mute these for at least one month, and resume after Ramadan if we must, just so that there are no distractions this month.

Plus, in order to make time for the timetable we have in mind, we won't have enough space unless we leave these habits, even if it's for just a month. If we can give ourselves a busy schedule, we won't feel idle and therefore tempted to do any of the above. It's all about planning and being prepared.

By leaving these habits before Ramadan begins, we can start Ramadan in a higher gear rather than crawling in on first gear.

# MAKING A TIMETABLE

After reading all of the previous slides, it will become clear that there is definitely a lot we can do and need to do. It won't be possible for us to do all of this effectively unless we have a routine. To create a routine, we need to make a timetable for everyday.

Ideally, as mentioned early, it would be best to have the entire month off. However, not all workplaces will allow this, and state schools would never permit it. Therefore, we must build our timetables around our day to day activities and pray for the complete reward.

When making a timetable, you'd need to be realistic. Don't give yourself too much to do. At the same time, we should be ambitious and give ourselves enough to challenge ourselves and keep us busy.

Think of the following when building your timetable:

- When would you sleep, and how many hours would you need?
- Will you be sleeping before *Suhur* after *Tarawih*, or will you be sleeping after *Fajr* only?
- Will you nap at any moment? If so, how long would you need?
- What will be your usual hours of work or education? When exactly would you leave home and return?
- Can you pray any of the required things in your breaks at work and school? Or on the way there and back?
- What times are the *Salahs* in your local Masjid and how long would it take from the moment you leave the house to the time you return? Consider that it may take five minutes to get ready.

- Will you be praying anything in the Masjid? If so, any additional *Salahs*, recitation or *Dhikr*?
- Which additional acts of worship are you going to do throughout your day? How much of each are you going to do and when would be the best time? How long will each take?
- Is your timetable going to change on the weekends? (ideally it should be the same each day so that it's easier to follow and get into a routine)
- Is it going to change in the last ten days at all?
- Are you planning on doing I'tikaf?
- When will you be having your *Iftar* and *Suhur*?
- When will you need to do chores? Do you need to do cooking, cleaning etc.?
- Make some time to spend with your family if it's a common thing in your house.
- When would you have your baths and showers?
- If you have any homework, or office work, when will you do it?

Show your timetable to a scholar and they may be able to guide you further on how to improve it.

EID DAY

THE NIGHT BEFORE EID

The night before Eid has been called the *Laylatu 'l-Ja'izah*, which means the night of the reward. It's a night in which we show gratitude to Allah Ta'ala for making it easier for us to fast, pray and be better Muslims overall. To show this gratitude, we continue the worship we had been doing until now to maintain the good routine we have built up in Ramadan.

Sadly, the night is taken in a different light nowadays. It's treated as a night to signal a holiday from Ramadan, a night in which restrictions are lifted and we no longer have to remember Allah Ta'ala.

In this night, a large proportion of Muslim families spend the night in either celebrating, decorating the house, or preparing food for Eid day. Rarely will you see people realising the importance of this night and spending it in worship like they would do in the preceding nights. We should continue to show our devotion to Allah Ta'ala in this night too.

# IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF EID

## **Sadaqatu 'I-Fitr**

Before Eid *Salah*, it's compulsory upon families in which the parents have enough wealth to give *Zakah* to give *Sadaqatu 'I-Fitr*. The parent has to give it for each child too, and can give it on behalf of their spouse too.

The money is used to give to the poor so that they too can enjoy the festivities of Eid. Unfortunately, if we give the money on Eid day, it will be impossible for them to receive it. This is why we should give it much in advance before Eid so that those responsible for collecting and distributing it can have it given to the poor in time for their Eid day.

The amount of money to be given per person varies every year depending on the prices of the items the calculation is based on. This is why it's important to make sure you check each year what the amount "per head" is.

However, the best method for calculating is using local values, which some websites calculate for you. Speak to your local Imam or scholar for more information on how it's calculated for your area.

You'll also notice that there are several possible amounts, though people tend to choose the lowest value (around £2 to £3 per person) in comparison to potentially £15 per person. We shouldn't let the generosity of Ramadan leave so early and we should opt for the highest or at least the moderate amount per person.

## **Eid Salah**

The Eid prayer is usually held in a specially designated area for *Eid Salah* every year, or in a large Masjid if the area is not available. Though the *Salah* should be ideally prayed early morning after the sun has risen, some Masjids may delay it for the convenience of their Musallis.

Before going for the *Eid Salah* for *Eidu 'l-Fitr* (the one after Ramadan), it's *Sunnah* to eat something light before you go, such as dates, to symbolise that today is not a day of fasting. For *Eidu 'l-Adha*, you should go without having anything to eat in the morning so that the first thing you eat is *Qurbani/Udhiyyah* meat ideally, though it may be difficult to make it the first thing you eat nowadays!

Wear your best clothes, even if they aren't new, and ensure you've had a *Ghusl* in the morning. Apply perfume too, and groom yourself as you would on *Jumu'ah*.

Also, when going and coming back from the *Salah*, choose a different route for both journeys, as is the *Sunnah*. Whilst walking there and back, repeat the *Takbir* of *Tashriq* saying:

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ وَلِلَّهِ الْحَمْدُ

As for the *Salah*, it consist of two parts:

- Two *Raka'ahs* of *Wajib Salah* in which we say *Allahu Akbar* whilst raising our hands an additional six times compared to the usual *Salah* we pray
- The Imam then delivers two *Khutbahs* as he does for *Jumu'ah*, sitting between the two with a short gap.

As for the six additional *Takbirs*:

As for the first three, as *Salah* begins and everyone has prayed their *Thana*, the Imam will say the *Takbir* three times, and everyone will raise their hands as usual for each one. After the third is said, everyone will fold their hands again and the Imam will begin reciting *Surah Fatihah*.

As for the other three, in the second *Rak'ah*, just before the Imam is about to go into *Ruku'*, he will say the *Takbir* three extra times again, and for each one, everyone will raise their hands as usual. After all three are said, the Imam will say a fourth, but this will be the usual *Takbir* to go into *Ruku'*.

Thereafter the *Salah* will continue as usual, and the Imam will say *Salam* to end the *Salah*.

After this, the Imam will stand on top of the *Mimbar* (pulpit) as he does in *Jumu'ah Salah* and say two *Khutbahs*. Once he finishes, the *Eid Salah* is over and everyone makes their way home. It's important to sit for the *Khutbah* as it is part of the entire *Salah*, just as it's important to sit for the *Khutbah* for the *Jumu'ah Salah*.

One important aspect of *Eid Salah* is to avoid meeting others to hug and say "Eid Mubarak" in the *Masjid* if possible. Although it's a time to express happiness, it has become more of a custom to do so, and many people actually feel offended if you don't meet them in the *Masjid*! Plus, it's against the etiquettes of the *Masjid* to raise voices, and usually the greetings result in further conversations.

As for the rest of the day of Eid, Muslims celebrate in various ways: some meet up with their families, or gather at the grandparents' house. Some have barbecues, whereas others hire halls. Whichever is the custom, it is indeed a time to celebrate how Allah Ta'ala has given us the ability to worship Him in the month of Ramadan.

However, amongst this thankfulness towards Allah Ta'ala we have to avoid doing anything that disappoints Him. We have to avoid mixed gatherings, wherein cousin brothers and sisters may intermingle, eat with one another and sit down together. Though families get together for Eid, it would be a shame for us to immediately violate the laws of Allah Ta'ala so soon after spending a month in pleasing Him.

Also, we should avoid going to Eid exhibitions in which there are mixed gatherings or music. They have become common in some cultures, but Islam prohibits both. We need to also remind ourselves that Eid is for thanking Allah Ta'ala and showing our happiness for the good deeds we have done. It's not a time to begin sinning again as the month of Ramadan is over.

AFTER RAMADAN

Once the day passes, you'll notice the difference immediately sadly.

The aura of Ramadan won't be there. You'll feel the emptiness, and even Masjids will seem emptier from the first day, Eid day itself. The numbers coming for *Fajr Salah* especially will dwindle, especially since there is no fasting obligatory and therefore there's no apparent need to stay awake at *Suhur* and *Fajr*.

Brothers who were trying to grow beards may start trimming or shaving again. Sisters who were cladding themselves in their headscarves may remove them again. Many bad habits may return. All of this could be due to the return of the *Shayatin* that were locked up, or it could be a sign that our Ramadan wasn't accepted by Allah Ta'ala for some reason.

Maybe we didn't sincerely try our best, or we weren't trying to please Allah Ta'ala and treated fasting and other forms of worship as a burden. When Allah Ta'ala likes an action, He inspires us to carry it on again. Or it could be that Allah Ta'ala was happy with our actions, but we were too inclined on disobeying Him, and sacrificed the wonderful relation we had for temporary and selfish happiness. Whichever reason it is, it's a sad ending to a beautiful month.

Islam promotes steadfastness and a constant fight against our desires and the *Shayatin*. In order to encourage this, we had the month of Ramadan to help us get an edge over both. However, after Ramadan it will be our duty to keep up our strength and find ways to continue the momentum we had built up.

One way is by continuing as much of the Ramadan routine as possible. We should still fast whenever we can, pray as much of the Noble Qur'an as possible, and stick to the *Dhikr* regimen we had made for ourselves.

In fact, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ even recommended for us to fast any six days in the month of Shawwal to keep this up:

**The one who fasts the month of Ramadan, and then follows it up with six fasts from Shawwal, it will be as though he fasts the entire time. (Muslim)**

مَنْ صَامَ رَمَضَانَ ثُمَّ أَتْبَعَهُ سِتًّا مِنْ شَوَّالٍ، كَانَ كَصِيَامِ الدَّهْرِ

The scholars explain that this reward is because thirty fasts of Ramadan, plus an addition six more of Shawwal equals to thirty six, and since Allah Ta'ala rewards all actions by tenfold at a minimum, we get the reward for 360 days of fasts, which is an entire year! So it's as though we are fasting everyday.

We can also fast on Mondays and Thursdays, as is the *Sunnah*, and on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of every month.

Lastly, we should continue meeting scholars and sitting in their gatherings, as their words will continue to inspire us to become better. They will remind us of the spirit and courage we felt in Ramadan, and will help us manage ourselves for the remaining year if we fall down until the next Ramadan comes.

Let us change this Ramadan for good, and not just for the month of Ramadan. If we were worshipping the month of Ramadan, then it makes sense for us to stop our worship once Ramadan ends. But if we were worshipping Allah Ta'ala, then He doesn't go away after Ramadan—He's there for the rest of the year too.

May Allah Ta'ala give us the ability to make this Ramadan the one that we change and improve ourselves for good. *Ameen*.