

THE MESSAGE

Spreading the Light of Knowledge

RAMADHAN SPECIAL



Charity

The parable of those who spend their substance in the way of Allah is that of a grain of corn: it groweth seven ears, and each ear hath a hundred grains. Allah giveth manifold increase to whom He pleaseth: And Allah careth for all and He knoweth all things.

Al-Qur'an, Surah 2, verse 261 (Surah Al-Baqara)

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Ramadhan...the month of blessings

In the name of Allah, The Most Beneficent, The Most Merciful.

Ramadhan is a month of many blessings for those who are proactive enough to take advantage of it. Sadly nowadays many of us do not make the best of this special month. It is the month when the doors of forgiveness are wide open. Does this mean we sit back and relax and wait for forgiveness? No, of course not. We should strive our utmost to be amongst those whom Allah forgives during this month. After all, if the doors of forgiveness are wide open, we must still walk through them and this requires effort.

As part of that effort we should try our utmost to ensure we are praying five times a day to start with. After all, is there really any benefit to fasting if we fulfill one pillar of our faith i.e fasting and neglect another pillar i.e prayer, which is more important and second only to the first pillar of faith, the shahadah (testimony of faith).

For those that say, "I don't need to pray because my faith is in my heart" etc and other such reasons then imagine if an employee turned around to their boss and said, "I don't need to do my work as it's in my heart". Could you expect your boss to pay you if you had this attitude? No, of course not. Then why should we expect forgiveness and Paradise if we take the same attitude with our prayers? Yes, it can be difficult to pray sometimes but now is the time to rectify this situation, especially as the benefits of praying are seen in this life and more importantly in the next life.

Shaytaan has spent the last eleven months whispering to us and trying to get us off the right path. Now, during this month when all the shaytaan's are chained up it is our opportunity to undo his training and step back on the path Allah intended for us...the path to forgiveness and Paradise. We should do this today and not think I'll start tomorrow or next week etc as death may come to any of us at any time.

We tend to assume that we will make it to old age. It is narrated in a hadith (a saying of the Prophet [peace and blessings of Allah be upon him]) that 50,000 years before Allah created creation, He wrote down in His Book everything that will happen - as our creator Allah knows our past and our future. This means that He has already recorded how long we will live. We could have another 30 years left, or maybe 5 years or maybe even 5 minutes but there is no doubt that our lifespan has already been written and there is no getting round this fact. Therefore the sensible person will realise this and attempt to make the best of this Ramadhan and the rest of their life. If we don't, then we really are taking a gamble with our destination in the afterlife, i.e Paradise or Hellfire.

Ramadhan is a golden opportunity for us to renew our Iman and character and we should all strive our utmost to make the best of this Ramadhan as it could easily be our last one. After Ramadhan one should emerge a better Muslim and person - if we don't then we need to seriously look at why not and where we have gone wrong. But rather than wait another year for next Ramadhan we should work straight away to get ourselves back on track.

All good that comes from this magazine is from Allah and any mistakes are ours so please forgive us for any shortcomings. - The Message Team.



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ISTIKHAARAH

Istikhaarah: The Prayer of GUIDANCE

We are humans, powerless in this sphere of life, knowledgeable only enough to survive. So why shouldn't we turn to Allah and seek His perfect help whenever we require it? Allah responds to the call of His servant when he asks for guidance, and we are after all seeking to do something in order to please Him.

Istikhaarah means to ask Allah to guide you to the path best for you concerning an affair with two halal options. In matters that are waajib (obligatory), haraam (forbidden) or makrooh (disliked) there is no need to pray Istikhaarah. Salaat-ul-Istikhaarah should only be used for matters that are mubaah (allowed) or in matters that are mustahabb (liked or encouraged), in which there is a decision to be made as to which one should be given priority (i.e. get married or go to grad school).

Many wrong notions exist concerning Istikhaarah. Many Muslims will pray, read the du'a, and run to bed expecting to see a dream showing them their future wife, what her favourite colour is, and some other weird fantasy. That is not the purpose of this salaah.

The results of an Istikhaarah can take many forms. Basically, you go by your feelings, whether you now feel more favourable or not. Also, you may notice events have changed, either for or against you. Note that you must follow the results of an Istikhaarah, because not doing so is tantamount to rejecting Allah's guidance once you've asked for it. Also, you

should firstly clear your mind, not have your mind already decided, and then afterwards follow the results willingly.

It is a sunnah that, if one must choose between permissible alternatives, one may pray two non-obligatory rak'at, even if they are of the sunnah prayers or a prayer for entering the mosque, and so on, during any time of the day or night, and to recite therein whatever one wishes of the Qur'aan after reciting al-Fatihah. Then one praises Allah and sends salutations to the Prophet and recites the supplication in the Hadith below.

The description of Salaat-ul-Istikharah was narrated by Jaabir ibn 'Abd-Allah al-Salami (may Allah be pleased with him) who said:

"The Messenger of Allah used to teach his companions to make Istikhaarah in all things, just as he used to teach them surahs from the Qur'aan. He said: 'If any one of you is concerned about a decision he has to make, then let him pray two rak'ahs of non-obligatory prayer, then say:

Allaahumma inni astakheeruka bi 'ilmika wa astaqriruka bi qudratika wa as'aluka min fadlika, fa innaka taqdiru wa laa aqdir, wa ta'lamu wa laa a'lam, wa anta 'allaam al-ghuyooob.

Allaahumma fa in kunta ta'lamu haadha'l-amra (then the matter should be mentioned by name) khayran li fi 'aajil amri wa aajilihi (or: fi deeni wa ma'aashi wa 'aaqibati amri) faqdurhu li wa yassirhu li thumma baarik li fihi. Allaahumma wa in kunta ta'lamu annahu sharrun li fi deeni wa ma'aashi wa 'aaqibati amri (or: fi 'aajili amri wa aajilihi) fasrifni 'anhu [wasrafhu 'anni] waqdur li al-khayr haythu kaana thumma radini bihi.

“O Allah, I seek Your guidance [in making a choice] by virtue of Your knowledge, and I seek ability by virtue of Your power, and I ask You of Your great bounty. You have power, I have none. And You know, I know not. You are the Knower of hidden things. O Allah, if in Your knowledge, this matter (**then it should be mentioned by name here**) is good for me both in this world and in the Hereafter (or: in my religion, my livelihood and my affairs), then ordain it for me, make it easy for me, and bless it for me. And if in Your knowledge it is bad for me and for my religion, my livelihood and my affairs (or: for me both in this world and the next), then turn me away from it, [and turn it away from me], and ordain for me the good wherever it may be and make me pleased with it.”

The Prophet, added that then the person should mention his need." [Sahih Bukhari]

Salaat-ul-Istikhaarah is just two rakats of a non-obligatory prayer, prayed at anytime during the day, with a specific dua at the end. While reciting the dua, you should be thinking about the situation you want to be advised about with pure intentions and from the bottom of your heart. And Allah says that whenever he guides a heart aright it can never be misguided. Afterwards, you should “have a good feeling” about one of your options. Whatever option you feel is best right after you say the dua should be your decision. If you're still in doubt, you can repeat.

An-Nawawi holds that "after performing the Istikhaarah, a person must do what he is wholeheartedly inclined to do and feels good about doing and should not insist on doing what he had desired to do before making the Istikhaarah. And if his feelings change, he should leave what he had intended to do, otherwise he is not completely leaving the choice to Allah, and would not be honest in seeking aid from Allah's power and knowledge. Sincerity in seeking Allah's choice, means that one should completely leave what he himself had desired or determined." Some people mistakenly wait for a dream to give a clear sign as to what decision to make, but this is not true, and often times it never really happens. In fact, dreams may lead you away from what Allah wants you to do, as Shaytaan might try to deceive you in your dreams.

Salat-ul-Istikhaarah is for everybody. It's a way for all of us to implore Allah for divine guidance and mercy. It is yet another invaluable resource from Allah to keep us on the straight and narrow Siraat al-Mustaqeem. The Prophet told all Muslims about Istikhaarah, not just the scholars. Despite this gift, too many of us take the advice of our friends and parents, or accept the norms of our society and act without ever wondering what Allah wants us to do. We must stop looking to the dunya for guidance. We must begin to consult Allah.

I cannot provide a better conclusion than saying that you must put your trust in Allah. You must have trust in His concern for us, and His ability to help us. Allah says:

"Put your trust in Allah, certainly, Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him)."

From missionislam.com

Appendix:

We all wish we knew the future so that when we make certain decisions we could be confident we were doing the right thing. Unfortunately none of us has this ability but Al-Hamdulillah in Islam we have been granted the Istikhaarah prayer. If we were to use this in the correct manner whenever we faced a major decision then there should not be many decisions we regret in life as we would know after having done Istikhaarah over a matter the outcome was the right one for us.

It is also important to understand that doing Istikhaarah doesn't mean we just pray and leave it at that and make no other effort. We should take every other possible action such as researching and investigating the matter to the best of our ability, as well as seeking advice from knowledgeable and experienced people.

As the article mentions some people think that one has to have a dream after Istikhaarah regarding the matter in question - this has no sound basis. Awaiting some sort of answer is not the point of the prayer. If we actually read the text of the du'a the answer is already there. When we make Istikhaarah we are basically asking Allah that if something is good for us then to make it easy for us to achieve and grant us blessing in it. If it is bad then we are asking for it to be kept away from us and to be content with the outcome - no matter how it may turn out. After all who other than Allah, our creator knows what is best for us in this world and for our hereafter. Allah already knows what has happened to us and knows everything that WILL happen to us in the future. Therefore, it is the sensible person who relies on Allah and performs Istikhaarah when having to make some major decision.

After doing Istikhaarah once we have decided on a matter we should then go ahead and do it or not do it if that is how one feels afterwards. If it is good for us then Allah will make it easy for us to achieve our objective and if it is bad Allah will keep it away from us.

Istikhaarah is done when a decision is to be made in matters which are neither obligatory nor prohibited in Islam. For example you would not need to do Istikhaarah for deciding whether to go for hajj or not. Because if one is financially able to do hajj then it becomes obligatory and you should go. Also for example you wouldn't need to do Istikhaarah for deciding whether to give up smoking or not because smoking is wrong and should be given up. Istikhaarah can be done and it is advisable to do it in all kinds of other permissible matters where you have a choice to make. This could include things such as buying something permissible, taking a job or choosing a spouse etc.

Some people think you have to pray Istikhaarah after Isha and then go straight to bed. This is a misconception surrounding the prayer. You can pray Istikhaarah at any time of the day and night. (Except of course at those times at which prayer is forbidden i.e at sunrise for example.)

Istikhaarah can also be done after two rak'ahs of regular sunnah prayer for example those prayed after zuhr, or after two rak'ahs of any naafil prayers whether they are regularly performed or not as long as one makes the intention to pray Istikhaarah at the same time as intending to pray that particular prayer. The du'a of Istikhaarah can also be said either before or after saying salaam in prayer.

Finally we need to remember as with all duas we need to try to fulfill the conditions of du'a being accepted i.e try to ensure our livelihood is halal, our food is halal etc.

For more in depth information on Istikhaarah, the following book is recommended: The Three Abandoned Prayers by Shaykh Adnaan Aali Uroor

Reality & Obligation in

Ramadhan

During this Ramadhan do not let the sweetness of our deeds vanish into the night, leaving only emptiness. When one contemplates the texts on fasting, its wisdom and goals in Shariah, and looks at the reality of the Muslim communities, one realizes a wide gap between the reality and our obligations. Remember that Ramadhan is a bounty that Allah blessed His servants with, to strengthen their faith, and increase their piety (Taqwa). Allah said: "O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become pious." (Al-Baqarah 2:183).

This article is an attempt to present the essential causes of this gap and some remedies. The primary reason for the gap is ignorance about the goals of fasting and the wisdom behind it. Many Muslims ignore the purpose and wisdom of fasting. Fasting is done merely to conform to the social environment without contemplation. If one is not aware of the divine wisdom of Shariah and its fruits in this world and in the hereafter, one will not apply it in the right way.

Goals of Fasting

Achieving Taqwa: is one of the most important wisdom of fasting. Fasting brings on Taqwa as it lessens the desire of the stomach and mutes the sexual appetite. Whoever fasts frequently would overcome these two desires more easily. This deters against committing abominations and sins and assist in controlling life leading to Taqwa.

Strengthening willpower and acquiring patience: The Prophet (sallallahu alayhe wa sallam) called Ramadhan the month of patience as it increases one's will power to control his desire and the selfishness of his soul. This training allows him to be strong in following Allah's commands. The most important being to carry the Message and propel it forward. The person trains himself to be patient in obeying Allah by stopping at the limits set by Allah both by way of action and abstention. Allah said: "These are the limits set by Allah, so approach them not." (Al-Baqarah 2:187).

Fasting is pure worship: The fact that he is abstaining from food and drink both in public and in secret shows his honest faith and strong love of Allah, and his knowledge and feeling that Allah is all-knowing of everything. For this reason Allah has made the reward for fasting greater than for any other type of worship. Allah said in the hadith Qudsi: "Every deed of the son of Adam will be multiplied [in rewards], the good deed by ten of its like, up to seven hundreds, up to whatever Allah wills, except fasting, it is for Me and I will reward it. He abandons his desire and his food for My sake.." (Related by Muslim) Ibn al-Qayyim said: "...And people may see that a person is not eating in front of them, but the fact that he is really abandoning his food and his desire for the sake of God is a thing that nobody can find out about, and that is the essence of fasting." (Zaad al-Ma'ad 2/29).

Relieving Muslims from life's distractions: Eating, drinking, and socializing all distract a person and weaken ties with Allah. It is by the Mercy of Allah that Muslims are ordered to fast so as not to be bothered by the intrusion of these activities. Nor by the thought

about them nor the anticipation for them when devoting themselves to all types of worship. Either reading the Qur'an, offering additional prayer or making I'tikaf. For this reason the Prophet (sallallahu alayhe wa sallam) said: "Fasting is a shield, and a secure fortress against Hell fire" (Related by Ahmad).

Discovering Allah's Blessings: A person experiences the hardship of the poor. He should then be thankful to Allah Who has blessed him with His bounty while others are deprived. This should make him more sympathetic and willing to share this bounty. The poor rediscovers that fasting helps a person be more devoted to worship. More able to concentrate and meditate. He should then be able of this devotion all year long, a blessing he should thank Allah for.

Acquiring strength and endurance: It has been discovered that depriving the body of food for a period of time helps its defense and endurance mechanism. This in turn protects the body from certain diseases.

Remember that fasting is not only dependent on abstentions: Many believe that fasting consist only of certain abstentions, forgetting that Allah established certain acts of worship with fasting. Among which are:

Qiyamul-layl: The Prophet (sallallahu alayhe wa sallam) said: "Whoever performed the night prayer during Ramadhan out of belief and anticipating God's rewards, will be forgiven his previous sins." (Related by Muslim). Performing Umrah: The Prophet (sallallahu alayhe wa sallam) said: "An Umrah during Ramadhan is like a Hajj with me." (Related by al-Hakim).

Offering Iftar (meal) to those who fasted. The Prophet (sallallahu alayhe wa sallam) said: "Whoever feeds a fasting person has the same reward as him, except that the reward of the fasting person will not be diminished." (Related by Ahmad).

Reading and completing the Qur'an: The Prophet (sallallahu alayhe wa sallam) said: "Fasting and [reading] Qur'an will intercede for the person: fasting will say: O Lord I forbade him eating and drinking so let me intercede for him, and the Qur'an will say: I deprived him from his night sleep so let me intercede for him," he then said: "So they will intercede." (Related by Ahmad). The Prophet (sallallahu alayhe wa sallam) used to recite the whole Qur'an to Angel Jibreel each Ramadhan.

Giving in charity: Ibn Abbas (radhiallahu anhu) said: "The Prophet (sallallahu alayhe wa sallam) was the most generous among people, and he was more generous during the month of Ramadhan." (Related by Muslim).

I'tikaf: which is to confine oneself in the masjid for prayer and invocation leaving the worldly activities. Ibn Abbas (radhiallahu anhu) said: "The Prophet (sallallahu alayhe wa sallam) used to perform I'tikaf during the last ten days of Ramadhan." (Related by Muslim). It is surprising that many people have abandoned I'tikaf though the Prophet (sallallahu alayhe wa sallam) never abandoned it from the time he arrived to Madinah until he died.

Supplication: In the verses dealing with fasting, Allah said: "And when My slaves ask you (O Muhammad) concerning Me, then answer them, I am indeed near to them. I respond to the invocations of the supplicant when he calls on Me." (Al-Baqarah 2: 186). This is an encouragement for the fasting person to increase his invocation. The Prophet (sallallahu alayhe wa sallam) said: "Three invocations will be answered: The invocation of the fasting person, the invocation of the oppressed, and the invocation of the traveller." (Related by Muslim).

Repentance: Ramadhan is the time of repentance and return to Allah, for it is a time when the devils are chained, and when many people are saved from hell fire every night by the grace of Allah.

Applying oneself in all good deeds in the last ten days of Ramadhan: Aysha (radhiallahu anha) said: "When the last ten days come, he (sallallahu alayhe wa sallam) would pray most of the night and wake his family, and apply himself, and tighten up his loincloth.", and she also said: "The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhe wa sallam) used to strive in the last days of Ramadhan more than he did during the other days." (Related by Muslim).

Abstaining from vain talk: Sins decrease the reward of fasting although they do not annul it. The Prophet (sallallahu alayhe wa sallam) said: "Fasting is not [only] abstaining from eating and drinking, but abstaining from vain and obscene talk, so if someone insulted you or wronged you say: I am fasting." (Related by al-Hakim) and he also said: "Whoever does not abandon lying, then Allah does not need him to abandon his food and drink." (Related by al-Bukhari).

Common errors made during Ramadhan

Excessive spending: Ramadhan should be a time to avoid being wasteful, and learning to be prepared in facing harder times by distinguishing the needs from the luxuries. Unfortunately, many people go beyond their limits to spend during Ramadhan. Whether in the varieties of food that they savor each night, or by the other types of spending.

Staying awake during the night and sleeping during the day: Some people sleep during most of the day when they are fasting. Ramadhan is not a time of being lazy, and this do not allow the full benefit from the experience of fasting. It is as if they have only inverted their nights into days and vice versa. In addition, some may spend a great portion of the night indulging in eating and drinking and socializing

Spending more time in socializing: Because people invite each other more often during Ramadhan they do tend to spend more time socializing with friends, and relatives. While it is a good deed to feed the fasting person, this should not result in precious time lost in vain talk. Use the occasion for remembering Allah and offering additional prayers, and for the Da'wah to Allah.

Insisting on performing a certain number of Rakaas during the Tarawih (night) prayer to the point of not praying behind the Imam and thus forfeiting the benefit of congregational prayer. This might also bring hatred and disagreement between the Muslims of one community.

Reading Qur'an too fast: Some insist on finishing the whole Qur'an once or more, even if they have to read very fast. Although reading the Qur'an many times is desirable, this should not be done hastily, especially during the Tarawih prayer without pondering upon its meaning. Allah ta'ala said: "This is a Book which We have sent down to you, full of blessings that they may ponder over its verses," (Saad 38:29), and the Prophet (sallallahu alayhe wa sallam) said: "Those who read the Qur'an in less than three days do not grasp [its meaning]"

Socializing in I'tikaf: Many people are eager to do I'tikaf but some confine themselves in the masjid not to pray and worship Allah but to talk and socialize.

The ways of doing good are numerous in Ramadhan Many people try to perform more than they are able to. By going beyond their capabilities, they end up not performing any deed in the desired way.


Scholars and Dai'ahs should assume a more prominent role in educating the people - both by talking to them and by giving the best example in their behavior which should comply to the Shariah and following the Sunnah.

The Muslim should realize that his priorities dictate that he does what benefits him in the Hereafter and should not put worldly interests first.

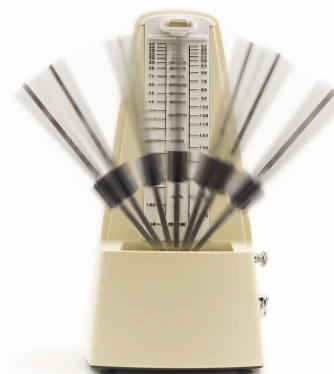
The Muslim should apply himself to deepen his sense of following the Sunnah of the Prophet (sallallahu alayhe wa sallam), in every aspect of his life, at all times and especially during the month of Ramadhan. This necessitates seeking more knowledge about the Fiqh of fasting and its etiquette, assimilating the wisdom and goals of fasting, and facilitating the means that allow all the Muslims to benefit from their fasting.

We ask Allah to accept our fast and our good deeds.

From Al-Jumuah Magazine, Vol 8, Issue 9

Source of article islaam.com. 

A TIME TO Reflect



The Prophet said, "There are two blessings which many people lose: (They are) Health and free time for doing good."

Today we have been brought up with the notion that "time is money". From the Islamic perspective this is couldn't be further from the truth. For a Muslim who is striving for the hereafter "time is good deeds". Whilst money may be the currency for this life, on the Day of Judgement the only acceptable currency will be the good deeds we have done in this life. These good deeds will be weighed up on the Scales on the Day of Judgement against our bad deeds. Also those people we have wronged in this life and have not sought forgiveness from before we die, we will have to compensate using our good deeds on the Day of Judgement. And should you run out of good deeds to compensate someone then some of their bad deeds will be given to you. Of course this compensation will be proportional to the wrong you did to them in this life.

Imagine you had a business that was losing thousands of pounds per day. We would of course do everything in our power to put a stop to this. Everyday in the same way we are losing out on good deeds. For every minute that passes that we don't perform a good deed then we have lost that time forever. Yet we seem to do little to stop this loss. Doing a good deed could be anything from greeting someone with a simple smile, helping someone, being kind to an animal, doing dhikr (remembrance of Allah) or even moving that broken bit of glass we sometimes see on the pavement but never move out of the way. Of course these must all be done with the thought that you are doing it for the sake of Allah to seek His pleasure. Also let us not forget one of the best and most important compulsory good deeds we can do and have been ordered to do: to perform our five daily prayers on time every day.

Viewing our time from a different perspective you could say that as time passes so the number of sins we commit

and have to account for also increases as well. A wise man once worked out that if he only committed a minimum of one sin (minor or major) a day that he had to repent for then already at his advanced age he had many thousands of sins to repent for. This is food for thought indeed considering we easily commit many sins per day not just one. For the sake of argument let us say an individual starts puberty at 14 years of age (in Islam the age of puberty is when a person becomes accountable for their actions) and dies at the age of 70. This person now has 56 years worth of sins to account for. If this person committed a minimum of one sin per day, then that equals 20,440 sins (56yrs X 365 days) to account for after death. That is a lot of bad deeds to be put on the negative side of the Scales on the Day of Judgement.

So how does one counteract this? Firstly we should try our best to repent from sins everyday. The Prophet (peace & blessings of Allah be upon him) out of awe of his creator used to ask forgiveness from Allah more than a hundred times a day despite the fact Allah had forgiven all his past and future sins! We should also try to do as many good deeds as possible to counteract our bad ones.

Ramadhan is the month in which Allah multiplies the reward for good deeds many times over. It is also the month when the doors of forgiveness are wide open. This means we can play some catch up and do as many good deeds as possible and help our balance of deeds come out of loss and into profit. Also maybe through asking for Allah's forgiveness some of our previous sins will be wiped away as well.

So we should make the best of this Ramadhan to do as much good as possible as it could easily be our last one.

Imam Shafi'ee said:
"Time is like a sword,
cut it before it cuts you."

The Importance of PRAYER

The importance of the prayer in Islam cannot be understated. It is the first pillar of Islam that the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned after mentioning the testimony of faith, by which one becomes a Muslim. It was made obligatory upon all the prophets and for all peoples.

Allah has declared its obligatory status under majestic circumstances. For example, when Allah spoke directly to Moses, He said,

"And I have chosen you, so listen to that which is inspired to you. Verily, I am Allah! There is none worthy of worship but I, so worship Me and offer prayer perfectly for My remembrance." [Taha 13-14]

Similarly, the prayers were made obligatory upon the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) during his ascension to heaven. Furthermore, when Allah praises the believers, such as in the beginning of surah al-Muminoon, one of the first descriptions He states is their adherence to the prayers.

Once a man asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) about the most virtuous deed. The Prophet (peace be upon him) stated that the most virtuous deed is the prayer. The man asked again and again. The first three times, the Prophet (peace be upon him) again answered, "The prayer," then on the fourth occasion he stated, "Jihad in the way of Allah." [This is from a hadith recorded by Ahmad and Ibn Hibban.]

The importance of prayer is demonstrated in the many of the Prophet's statements. For example, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

"The first matter that the slave will be brought to account for on the Day of Judgment is the prayer. If it is sound, then the rest of his deeds will be sound. And if it is bad, then the rest of his deeds will be bad." [Recorded by al-Tabarani.]

The importance of the prayers lies in the fact that no matter what actions one performs in his life, the most important aspect is one's relationship to Allah, that is, one's faith (imaan), God-consciousness (taqwa), sincerity (ikhlas) and worship of Allah (`ibaadah). This relationship with Allah is both demonstrated and put into practice, as well as improved and increased, by the prayer. Therefore, if the prayers are sound and proper, the rest of the deeds will be sound and proper; and if the prayers are not

sound and proper, then the rest of the deeds will not be sound and proper, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself stated.

In reality, if the prayer is performed properly with true remembrance of Allah and turning to Him for forgiveness it will have a lasting effect on the person. After he finishes the prayer, his heart will be filled with the remembrance of Allah. He will be fearful as well as hopeful of Allah. After that experience, he will not want to move from that lofty position to one wherein he disobeys Allah. Allah has mentioned this aspect of the prayer when He has said,

"Verily, the prayer keeps one from the great sins and evil deeds" (al-Ankaboot 45). Nadwi has described this effect in the following eloquent way,

Its aim is to generate within the subliminal self of man such spiritual power, light of faith and awareness of God as can enable him to strive successfully against all kinds of evils and temptations and remain steadfast at times of trial and adversity and protect himself against the weakness of the flesh and the mischief of immoderate appetites. [Nadwi, p. 24]

The overall affect that the properly performed prayers should have upon humans is described in other verses in the Quran:

"Verily, man was created impatient, irritable when evil touches him and niggardly when good touches him. Except for those devoted to prayer those who remain constant in their prayers..." (al-Maarij 19-23).

As for the Hereafter, Allah's forgiveness and pleasure is closely related to the prayers. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

"Allah has obligated five prayers. Whoever excellently performs their ablutions, prays them in their proper times, completes their bows, prostrations and khushu***, has a promise from Allah that He will forgive him. And whoever does not do that has no

promise from Allah. He may either forgive him or punish him." [Recorded by Malik, Ahmad, Abu Dawud, al-Nasa'i and others.]

The prayers are a type of purification for a human being. He turns and meets with his Lord five times a day. As alluded to above, this repeated standing in front of Allah should keep the person from performing sins during the day. Furthermore, it should also be a time of remorse and repentance, such that he earnestly asks Allah for forgiveness for those sins that he committed. In addition, the prayer in itself is a good deed that wipes away some of the evil deeds that he performed. These points can be noted in the following hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him):

"If a person had a stream outside his door and he bathed in it five times a day, do you think he would have any filth left on him?" The people said, "No filth would remain on him whatsoever." The Prophet (peace be upon him) then said, "That is like the five daily prayers: Allah wipes away the sins by them." (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

In another hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

"The five daily prayers and the Friday Prayer until the Friday prayer are expiation for what is between them." (Recorded by Muslim.)

Jamaal al-Din Zarabozo

He Came to Teach you Your Religion
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***Khushu in the prayer is where the person's heart is attuned and focussed on the prayer. This feeling in the heart is then reflected on the body. The person remains still and calm. His gaze is also lowered. Even his voice is affected by this feeling in the heart.

Excerpted with modifications from
Islaam.com 


Advice to Muslims in Ramadhan

O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint,-

Al-Qur'an, Surah 2, Verse 183 (Surah Al-Baqara)

1. Fast Ramadhan with belief and truly seeking the reward of Allah the Most High so that He may forgive you your past sins.
2. Beware of breaking your fast during the days of Ramadhan without a valid Islamic excuse, for it is from the greatest of sins.
3. Pray Salat ut-Taraweeh and the night prayer during the nights of Ramadhan - especially on Layatul-Qadr - based on belief and truly seeking the reward of Allah, so that Allah may forgive you your past sins.
4. Make sure that your food, your drink and your clothing are from halal means, in order that your actions be accepted, and your supplications answered. Beware of refraining from the halal while fasting and breaking your fast with the haram.
5. Give food to some fasting people to gain a reward similar to theirs.
6. Perform your five prayers on time in congregation to gain the reward and Allah's protection.
7. Give a lot of charity for the best charity is that of Ramadhan.
8. Beware of spending your time without performing righteous deeds, for you will be responsible and reckoned for it and will be rewarded for all you do during your time.
9. Perform `umrah in Ramadhan for `Umrah in Ramadhan is equal to Hajj.
10. Seek help for fasting during the day by eating the sahoor meal in the last part of the night before the appearance of Fajr.
11. Hasten breaking your fast after the sun has truly set in order to gain the love of Allah.
12. Perform ghusl before Fajr if you need to purify yourself from the state of major impurity so that you are able to do acts of worship in a state of purity and cleanliness.
13. Cease the opportunity of being in Ramadhan and spend it with the good that has been revealed in it - by reciting the noble Qur'an and pondering and reflection of its meanings so that it be a proof for you with your Lord and an intercessor for you on the Day of Reckoning.
14. Preserve your tongue from lying, cursing, backbiting and slander for it decreases the reward of fasting.
15. Do not let fasting cause you cross your boundaries by getting upset due to the slightest of reasons. Rather, fasting should be a cause of peacefulness and tranquility of your soul.
16. Upon completion of fasting, be in a state of taqwa of Allah the Most High, being aware of Allah watching you in secret and in public, in thankfulness for His favors, and steadfastness upon obedience of Allah by doing all what He has ordered and shunning all that He has prohibited.
17. Increase in remembrance of Allah, seeking of forgiveness, asking for Paradise and protection against the Fire, especially when fasting, while breaking the fast and during suhoor, for these actions are among greatest causes of attaining Allah's forgiveness.
18. Increase in supplication for yourself, your parents, your children and Muslims, for Allah has ordered making of supplications and has guaranteed acceptance.
19. Repent to Allah with a sincere repentance in all times by leaving sins, regretting those that you have done before and firmly deciding not to return to them in the future, for Allah accepts repentance of those who repent.
20. Fast six days of Shawwal, for whoever fasts Ramadhan and then follows it with six days of Shawwal, it is as if he fasts all the time.
21. Fast on the Day of `Arafah, the 9th of Dhul Hijjah, to attain success by being forgiven your sins of the last year and the coming year.
22. Fast on the day of `Aashuraa', the 10th of Muharram, along with the 9th, to attain success by being forgiven your sins of the past year.
23. Continue being in a state of iman and taqwa and perform righteous actions after the month of Ramadhan, until you die. "And worship your Lord until there comes to you the certainty (i.e. death)". [Qur'an 15:99]
24. Ensure that you attain the positive effects of your acts of worship such as prayer, fasting, zakat and hajj, sincere repentance and leaving of customs that are in variance with the Sharee`ah.
25. Invoke a lot of salawat and salam upon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him, his Companions and all those who follow them until the Day of Judgment.

From the book "Khulaasatul Kalaam" by Shaykh Jaarullah.

Article excerpted with modifications from islaam.com. 



Night of AL-QADR

The most virtuous night of the year

Its virtue:

The night of Al-Qadr is the most virtuous night of the year. Allah says in the Qur'an: "We revealed it on the night of power [that is, Al-Qadr]. What will tell you what the night of power is? It is better than a thousand months." Any action therein, for example, reciting the Qur'an, making remembrance of Allah, and so on, is better than acting for one thousand months which do not contain the night of Al-Qadr.

It is preferred to seek this night:

It is preferred to seek this night during the last ten nights of Ramadan, as the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, strove his best in seeking it during that time. We have already mentioned that the Prophet would stay up during the last ten nights, would wake his wives, and then would remain apart from them to worship.

Which night is it?

Scholars hold different opinions as to the night, which is the night of Al-Qadr. Some are of the opinion that it is the 21st, some say the 23rd, others say the 25th and still others say it is the 29th. Some say that it varies from year to year but it is always among the last ten nights of Ramadan. Most scholars, though, vouch for the 27th.

Ahmad recorded, with a Authentic chain, from Ibn `Umar that the Prophet said: "He who likes to seek that night should do so on the 27th. 'Ubayy ibn K`ab said: By Allah, and there is no god but Him, it is during Ramadan-and He swore to that-and by Allah, I know what night it is. It is the night during which the Prophet ordered us to make prayers, the night of the 27th. Its sign is that the sun rises in the morning white and without any rays." (Related by Muslim, Abu Dawud, Ahmad, and by At-Tirmidhi who called it Authentic.)

Praying and making supplications during the night of Al-Qadr:

Al-Bukhari and Muslim record from Abu Hurairah that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "Whoever prays during the night of Al-Qadr with faith and hoping for its reward will have all of his previous sins forgiven."

As to the supplication during the night of Al-Qadr, `A'ishah said: "I asked the Messenger of Allah: 'O Messenger of Allah, if I know what night is the night of qadr, what should I say during it?' He said: 'Say: O Allah, You are pardoning and You love to pardon, so pardon me.'" (Related by Ahmad, Ibn Majah, and by At-Tirmidhi, who called it Authentic.)

Editors Note: It is preferable and better to seek this night during the odd nights of the last ten days of Ramadhan, i.e the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th and 29th nights. If one finds this too much they should try their best to at least seek it on the odd nights of the last 7 days, i.e 25th, 27th and 29th nights rather than just trying on the 27th night as the night of Qadr changes from year to year.

From www.islamonline.net **END**



Ten

Things We Waste

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim

1. Our Knowledge:

Wasted by not taking action with it.

2. Our Actions:

Wasted by committing them with out sincerity.

3. Our Wealth:

Wasted by using on things that will not bring us ajr (reward). We waste our money, our status, our authority, on things, which have no benefit in this life or in akhirah (hereafter).

4. Our Hearts:

Wasted because they are empty from the love of Allah, and the feeling of longing to go to Him, and a feeling of peace and contentment. In it's place, our hearts are filled with something or someone else.

5. Our Bodies:

Wasted because we don't use them in Ibaadah (worship) and service of Allah.

6. Our Love:

Our emotional love is misdirected, not towards Allah, but towards something/someone else.

7. Our Time:

Wasted, not used properly, to compensate for that which has passed, by doing what is righteous to make up for past deeds

8. Our Intellect:

Wasted on things that are not beneficial, that are detrimental to society and the individual, not in contemplation or reflection.

9. Our Service:

Wasted in service of someone who will not bring us closer to Allah, or benefit in dunyaa (the present life)

10. Our Dhikr:

Wasted, because it does not affect our hearts or us.

[Based on a lesson of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah]

Fasting & Medical Issues



There are many medical issues surrounding fasting which can cause confusion amongst people. Through lack of knowledge and understanding we sometimes bring about hardship on ourselves when fasting. We forget that Islam is a religion of ease that takes a middle road. The short discussion below will hope to clarify some medical situations in relation to fasting that do and do not break the fast.

Among the things that break the fast are things that are classified as being like eating or drinking, such as taking medicines and pills by mouth, or injections of nourishing substances, or blood transfusions.

Injections that are not given to replace food and drink but are used to administer medications such as penicillin and insulin, or tonics, or vaccinations, do not break the fast, regardless of whether they are intra-muscular or intravenous. **But to be on the safe side, all these injections should be given during the night.**

Kidney dialysis, whereby the blood is taken out, cleaned, and put back with some chemicals or nourishing substances such as sugars and salts added, is considered to break the fast.

According to the most correct view, suppositories, eye-drops, ear-drops, having a tooth extracted and treating wounds do not break the fast.

Having a blood sample taken does not break the fast and is permissible because it is something that is needed.

Medicines used by gargling do not break the fast so long as they are not swallowed. If a person has a tooth filled and feels the taste of it in his throat, this does not break his fast.

The following things do NOT break the fast:

- Having the ears syringed; nose drops and nasal sprays so long as one avoids swallowing anything that reaches the throat.
- Tablets that are placed under the tongue to treat angina and other conditions - so long as one avoids swallowing anything that reaches the throat.
- Anything inserted into the vagina, such as pessaries, douches, scopes or fingers for the purpose of a medical examination.
- Insertion of a scope or intra-uterine device (IUD or "coil") and the like into the uterus.
- Insertion into the urethra for males or females of a catheter, opaque dye for diagnostic imaging, medication or solutions for cleansing the bladder.
- Dental fillings, tooth extractions, cleaning of the teeth, use of siwaak or toothbrush - so long as one avoids swallowing anything that reaches the throat. (Editors Note: Generally it is recommended to stay on the safe side and to use an unflavoured miswaak to brush one's teeth when fasting - this helps to avoid the possibility of anything entering the throat.)
- Rinsing, gargling or applying topical mouth sprays - so long as one avoids swallowing anything that reaches the throat.
- Subcutaneous, intramuscular or intravenous injections except for those used to provide nourishment.
- Oxygen.
- Anaesthetic gases so long as the patient is not given nourishing solutions.

- Medications absorbed through the skin, such as creams and patches used to administer medicine and chemicals. (Editors Note: This would include the use of nicotine patches. Therefore using nicotine patches does not break the fast - good news for those attempting to give up smoking.)
- Insertion of a catheter into veins for diagnostic imaging or treatment of blood vessels in the heart or other organs.
- Use of a laparoscope (instrument inserted through a small incision in the abdomen) to examine the abdominal cavity or to perform operations.
- Taking biopsies or samples from the liver or other organs so long as this is not accompanied by the administration of solutions.
- Gastroscopy so long as this is not accompanied by the administration of solutions or other substances.
- Introduction of any instrument or medication to the brain or spinal column.

With regard to mucus coming from the head (nose and sinuses) and phlegm coming from the chest by coughing and clearing the throat, if it is swallowed before it reaches the mouth, this does not break a person's fast, because it is a problem which all people have; but if it is swallowed after it reaches the mouth, this does break the fast. However, if it is swallowed unintentionally, it does not break the fast.

Inhaling water vapours, as may happen to people working in desalination plants, does not break the fast.

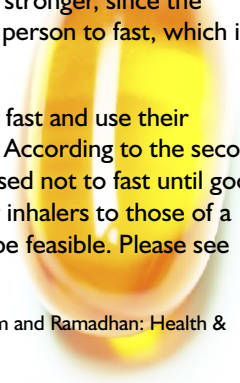
If a fasting person is injured or suffers a nosebleed, or gets water or petrol in his mouth by accident, this does not break his fast. If he gets dust, smoke or flies in his mouth by accident, this does not break his fast either. Things that one cannot avoid swallowing, like one's own saliva, or dust from grinding flour, do not break the fast.

Asthma Inhalers/Puffers

Muslim jurists differ on this issue. Some leading jurists argue that using an asthma inhaler is not classified as eating or drinking, and is therefore permissible during fasting. Others argue that because the inhaler provides small amounts of liquid medicine to the lungs, it breaks the fast. Perhaps the former view is stronger, since the inhaler assists with breathing and helps the person to fast, which is to abstain from food, drink.

According to the first view, asthmatics may fast and use their inhalers whenever required during fasting. According to the second view, poorly controlled asthmatics are advised not to fast until good control is achieved. Others may alter their inhalers to those of a longer acting variety such that fasting may be feasible. Please see your GP for further advice.

Excerpted with modifications from www.islam-qa.com and Ramadhan: Health & Spirituality Guide (Department of Health)





EASY GOOD Deeds

Ramadhan is the month when all of our good deeds if done sincerely for the sake of Allah alone and no-one else have their reward multiplied many times over. With this in mind presented below is a selection of easy to do good deeds whose rewards relative to the effort required to do them are huge. If the reward for performing them normally is so big then we only imagine how much more reward we will get from Allah for doing them during Ramadhan. Considering each of the deeds listed in the article only takes about two minutes maximum to complete then it is really is a loss for us to not to try and do these deeds outside of Ramadhan and a great mistake to not to attempt them during Ramadhan.

Saying Subhaan Allah 100 Times
Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "Is anyone of you incapable of earning one thousand Hasanah (rewards) in a day?". Someone from his gathering asked, "How can any one of us earn a thousand Hasanah?". He (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "Glorify Allah^[1] a hundred times and a thousand Hasanah will be written for you, or a thousand sins^[2] will be wiped away." (Sahih Muslim)

Notes:
^[1] To glorify Allah means to say SUBHAAN ALLAH.
^[2] Sins being wiped away refers to minor sins.

Reciting Ayat al-Kursi after every fardh(obligatory) prayer.
Abu Umamah Al-Bahili, (may Allah be pleased with him) related of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), that he said: "He whosoever recites the verse (Surah 2: Ayah 255 [Ayat al-Kursi]) after every obligatory (fardh) prayer will not be forbidden to enter Jannah except due to death."
(This Hadith was reported by Nasaiee, Ibn-ul-Sanee and others in The Sound Hadith Series, Hadith #972.)

Reciting Surah Al-Ikhlâs.
Narated By Abu Said Al-Khudri : The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to his companions, "Is it difficult for any of you to recite one third of the Qur'an in one night?"
This suggestion was difficult for them so they said, "Who among us has the power to do so, O Allah's Apostle?" Allah's Apostle replied: " Allah (the) One, the Self-Sufficient Master Whom all creatures need.' (Surah Al-Ikhlâs 112) is equal to one third of the Qur'an."
- From Sahih Bukhari
I.e the reward for reciting Surah Al-Ikhlâs

(Surah number 112 of the Qur'an) once is equal to the reward of reciting a third of the Qur'an.

Sending Blessings upon the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)
Abdullah bin Amr bin Al-'As reported that he heard the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), saying, "If anyone invokes blessings upon me once, Allah will bestow blessings upon him ten times over."
- From Sahih Muslim

Some quick & easy recommended remembrance for after prayer.
Abdullah bin Amr, (may Allah be pleased with him), related of the Prophet (peace & blessings of Allah be upon him) that he said:
"Two qualities or characteristics that whosoever maintains them as a believing Muslim slave servant of Allah, the Almighty will definitely enter Jannah. They are very simple and easy to maintain.

Yet, only few are those who abide and fulfill (these two supplications).
First: one should say after every obligatory prayer: "Subhan- Allah," ten times, "Alhamdu-lil-lah," ten times and "Allah-u-Akbar," ten times. This will make 150 phrases to be uttered, however on the scale of Allah, the Almighty, they are equivalent to 1500 times. Second: Say , when going to sleep for the night: "Allah-u-Akbar," 34 times, "Alhamdu-lil-lah," 33 times and "Subhan-Allah," 33 times. This will make 100 phrases to be uttered, but will be considered 1000 times on the scale of Allah, the Almighty."

The Prophet (peace & blessings of Allah be upon him) counted these supplications on the knuckles of his fingers. When he was asked: "O Prophet of Allah! You say

that these items are simple to do, but only few people who maintain them how could that be?" He, (peace & blessings of Allah be upon him) replied: "Satan comes to a person before he sleeps and makes him so drowsy that he cannot say these few words of supplication. Moreover, Satan comes to man, while still in prayers and reminds him of other things that he must do after prayer, not allowing him to maintain these words of supplication right after one finishes his prayer."

(This Hadith is reported by Abu Dawoud, Tirmidhi, Nasaiee.)

Saying Subhaan Allaah wa bi hamdih (Praise and glory be to Allaah) one hundred times.
It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever says Subhaan Allaah wa bi hamdih (Praise and glory be to Allah) one hundred times, morning and evening, his sins^[3] will be erased even if they are like the foam of the sea." (From Sahih Bukhaari and Sahih Muslim.)

Note:
^[3] Sins being wiped away refers to minor sins.

AND FINALLY A REMINDER:
It was narrated that 'Aa'ishah said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "O people, you should do whatever good deeds you can, for Allah does not get tired (of giving reward) until you get tired. And the most beloved of good deeds to Allah is that in which a person persists, even if it is little. If the family of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) started to do something, they would persist in it."
From Sahih Bukhaari and Sahih Muslim.

Bereavement
Support

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Patient Support
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SPOTLIGHT ON

Muslim Female Chaplaincy

As the Muslim population in the UK increases there is a greater need for Muslim chaplains to be present within mainstream institutions particularly in higher education, prisons and hospitals. The role of the chaplain is not just in supporting Muslims but as part of a multi-faith chaplaincy to be available to assist people from other faiths or no faith who need help.

As a Muslim chaplain there is an obvious expectation for you to provide input on issues that affect Muslims within these institutions e.g. prayer facilities, halal

food, social etiquettes, gender relations, as well as religiously-sensitive pastoral care and support.

The ability to listen and be non-judgemental is vital in carrying out this role as is the need for keeping confidential anything of a personal or sensitive nature which patients, prisoners or students confide in you. You should have a sufficient understanding of Islam in order to use it as a reference point for Muslims who approach you and you should not abuse your position of trust by proselytising to non-Muslims.

There have been calls not just from Muslims within these institutions for the presence of chaplains, but also demands from non-Muslim staff who recognise both the need for such individuals as well as the potential benefits these individuals will bring to their institution. Chaplaincy is a profession that is complimentary to the role of a Muslim woman and does not replace the role of, or need for, imams in these institutions as well.

By Ms Shereen Firdaus Binte Aziz
(Recently qualified Muslim Chaplain.)