

DEEN DIALOGUE



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Closing Remarks

“As-salaamu alaykum!”

With the academic year coming to an end, I am honoured to have had the opportunity in continuing the work of these innovative and beneficial newsletters from its founders, Aisha Patel and Sherzah Jamal.

Not only do these newsletters allow students on campus to be heard but it is also an easy way to gain skills whilst exploring Islamic topics in more depth. I hope both the writers and readers benefitted from the wonderful articles that have been published this year.

The final issue's theme is on Ramadan, a currently very relevant topic. The issue looks into certain aspects of this blessed month and talks about balancing deen with dunya (something I'm sure many of us struggle with as Ramadan overlaps with our exam period).

I'd like to end by thanking everyone who was involved in writing, editing and designing these issues as these newsletters would not have been made possible without you all. May Allah reward all of you for your efforts.

Lastly, Jazakallah Khayr to the readers, I hope you all enjoyed reading this years newsletters and found them to be beneficial. Salaam.

Aamina Syyed
Editor in Chief of Deen Dialogue

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ

In the Name of Allah, all praise is for Allah, and peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of Allah.

How is it that two individuals may hear the exact same verse of Qur'an, or hadith of the Prophet ﷺ and while the first individual finds his eyes spilling over with tears, his heart moved by the reminder, the second individual is left completely unaffected? The only thing that separates these two individuals is the condition of their hearts.

An-Nu'man ibn Bashir (R.A) narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

“Beware! There is a piece of flesh in the body, if it becomes good the whole body becomes good, but if it is corrupt the whole body is corrupt, and that is the heart.”

Sahih al-Bukhari 52

This hadith serves as an introduction to this reminder, showing us how important it is for us to protect and purify our hearts, especially when living in the West, in a world of increasing fitnah. Our hearts are constantly being tugged at by all kinds of desires and temptations, being pulled towards sin and transgression. Our eyes and ears acting like gutters, spilling everything that we see and hear directly into our heart.

Now, a great virtue of the heart is that it is the home of happiness, peace, patience and tawakkul. A state of true contentment can only be reached by attaching one's heart to Allah Azzawajal, as was beautifully summarised by Ibn al-Qayyim (رحمه الله):

“Truly in the heart there is a void that cannot be removed except with the company of Allah. In it is a sadness which will not leave except by happiness with knowing Him and being true to Him... In it is a fire of regret which cannot be extinguished except by satisfaction with His commands, prohibitions, and decrees, and embracing patience with that until the time he meets Him... In it is a void that cannot be filled except by His love, turning to Him, always remembering Him, and being sincere to Him. Were a person to be given the entire world and everything in it, that would never fill the void.”

Madārij al-Sālikīn 3/156

On the Day of Judgement, Allah Azzawajal will not judge us on the wealth and status that we amassed in this life, nor will He look at our physical appearance or the material things that we obsess over today. Rather, Allah SWT will judge us on our deeds and the intention by which they were carried out...He will look at our hearts

So now that we understand the importance of the heart, our next step is to reflect upon the condition of our own hearts. How do we know if our hearts are healthy or diseased? If they are pure and white, or dark and corrupt?

Below are a few questions we can ask ourselves to diagnose our hearts:

1) How does your heart react when you hear the recitation of the Qur'an?

“The true believers are those who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts become fearful, and when His verses are recited to them, it increases them in faith; and upon their Lord they rely.”

Surah Al-Anfal (8:2)

2) When was the last time you shed a tear for the sake of Allah Azzawajal?

Perhaps after hearing a powerful verse of Qur'an, or after reading a hadith of our beloved Prophet ﷺ, or purely out of love for Allah SWT, and a longing to be close to Him. When was the last time, if ever?

3) How do you react when you are advised?

Do you accept the advice with humility, striving thereon to improve and act upon the advice, or do you become defensive and argumentative? A soft heart will accept the truth, but a hard heart will reject it, and will become arrogant when corrected.

Although this is not an exhaustive list of the symptoms, inshaaAllah we have now recognised the deficiencies in our hearts. But before we can rectify these weaknesses, we must first look for the cause; what is it that has hardened our hearts, and taken us away from Allah SWT? This hardening of the heart is caused by our sins: missing prayers, listening to music, not lowering the gaze, and so on.

“Have you seen ‘O Prophet’ those who have taken their own desires as their god? ‘And so’ Allah left them to stray knowingly, sealed their hearing and hearts, and placed a cover on their sight. Who then can guide them after Allah? Will you not then be mindful?”

Surah Al-Jathiyah (45:23)

Now that we have reflected upon the condition of our hearts, and we have identified the sins which have hardened our hearts, striving to now cut these sins out of our lives, we can begin to apply some remedies and rectifiers of the heart. Again, this is not an exhaustive list, and there are many other ways in which we can purify our hearts, but inshaaAllah we can start with the methods listed below:

1) Reciting, listening to, and reflecting upon the Qur'an.

This is the most effective way to purify the heart, with the Speech of Allah. Spend some time with the Qur'an everyday, even if it just reading one verse, and watch as your heart begins to soften, and your love for Allah and His Speech increases.

“Allah has sent down the best message - a Book of perfect consistency and repeated lessons - which causes the skins of those who fear their Lord to tremble, then their skin and hearts soften at the mention of Allah...”

Surah Az-Zumar (39:23)

2) Beware of becoming attached to the dunya.

If we allow our hearts to become attached to this world, to our wealth, possessions, and worldly desires, then we leave little to no space in our hearts for Allah SWT.

“But you prefer the worldly life, while the hereafter is far better and more lasting.”

Surah Al-A'la (87:16-17)

3) Be in the company of good, pious people.

Keep friends who remind you of Allah SWT, who encourage you to do good deeds and help you avoid sin. Those who will advise you with sincerity, wisdom, and kindness. A good companion is a blessing from Allah Azzawajal, so hold on to good company, and strive to be that good companion for those around you.

Ultimately, our hearts are in the hands of Allah Azzawajal, and so we should ask Him to rectify our hearts. The Prophet ﷺ would often make this du'a:

يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِي عَلَى دِينِكَ

Ya Muqallibal qulub, thabbit qalbi 'ala dinik

“O Changer of the Hearts! Strengthen my heart upon Your Religion.”

Jami' at-Tirmidhi 2140

And Allah SWT knows best.

Ramadan is one of the most important and spiritual events in the Islamic calendar. However, within Ramadan, and just after it; there are some key dates to note if you want to go above and beyond with your worship. Fasting already has virtue in its sacrifice but using Ramadan as an opportunity to dedicate more fully to worship can also help you achieve righteousness. Going that extra mile in Ramadan can make the experience more fulfilling, as going beyond fard means everything is a choice you made for Allah.

Laylatul Qadr

Laylatul Qadr is often translated as the 'Night of Power' or the 'Night of Decree' or the 'Night of Glory.' It was the night in which Allah began the revelation of the Quran to the Prophet (S.A.W). In the Quran, Laylatul Qadr is said to be 'better than one thousand months.' (Qur'an 97:3). That is equivalent to 84 years!

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

"Whoever establishes the prayers on the night of Qadr out of sincere faith and hoping to attain Allah's rewards (not to show off) then all his past sins will be forgiven."

Sahih al-Bukhari 35

This is essentially warning people against seeing this night as a loophole to avoid doing their prayers consistently throughout the year. Some who may not fulfill their religious obligations throughout the year but then tick the 'religious dedication box' all in one night. And there's another feature of Laylatul Qadr that prevents this: no-one knows for sure when it is!

When is Laylatul Qadr? As mentioned, the date is not exactly known. What we do know, however, is that it is on one of the last 10 nights of Ramadan – specifically odd nights (21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, 29th). There is beauty in not knowing the exact date. Firstly, it prevents people from putting a disproportionate amount of effort on one single night. Instead, people spread this more intense worship over 5 different nights with either a rest in between or keeping the momentum going even between these nights out of habit. After all, Islam teaches us to be moderate and balanced in all aspects of life.

Secondly, having an ambiguous date for Laylatul Qadr encourages us to engage in more extra worship in the last third of Ramadan in the hopes of catching the right night. Although people start feeling burnt out towards the end of Ramadan (not eating and sleeping late will do that to you) this encourages us to hit the ground running for the last stretch.

This extra worship can take many forms: extra prayers, reading Quran or heartfelt du'aa. In particular, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ advised that we read this du'aa:

Aisha (R.A) asked, "O Messenger of Allah, what is your view if I know when the Night of Al Qadr is, then what should I say in it?". He said, "Say:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ عَفْوٌ كَرِيمٌ تُحِبُّ الْعَفْوَ فَأَعْفُ عَنِّي

Allāhumma innaka `Afuwwun [Karīmun], tuḥibbul- `afwa fa `fu `annī

"O Allah, indeed You are Pardoning, [Generous,] You love pardon, so pardon me."

Jami` at-Tirmidhi 3513

Hence, Laylatul Qadr is an amazing opportunity to go out on a high note, having spiritually cleansed yourself, knowing you gave Ramadan your all. Inshallah, it'll help you solidify good habits for the rest of the year and for the rest of your lives!

Six Fasts of Shawwal

Shawwal is the month directly after Ramadan, in which it is Sunnah to fast for 6 extra days. This does not include Eid Al-Fitr, and you are actively discouraged from fasting on Eid. Take a break! The 6 fasts can be spaced out throughout the month but it is often recommended that you fast 6 consecutive days after Eid. This sounds like an absolute task – especially after your stomach has probably expanded PS (Post-Samosas). However, you are much more likely to forget or procrastinate if you don't do then quickly. You'll also be in a momentum of fasting by then, having done it for a whole month.

And yes, you may feel like Ramadan is finally over and all you want is to be able to go the kitchen during the day, go into the fridge and actually eat the stuff instead of simply smelling it (or maybe that's just me). However, there are so many incredible benefits of keeping these fasts.

Abu Ayyub (R.A) reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

“Whoever fasts the month of Ramadan and then follows it with six days of fasting in the month of Shawwal, it will be as if he fasted for the entire year.”

Sahih Muslim 1164

He explained this, saying that since fasting in Ramadan brings the reward of 10 like it, Ramadan is like fasting for 10 months. Hence, fasting an extra 6 days brings the reward of 2 months, which completes the year. This makes it an amazing opportunity to keep fasting with tenfold blessings and complete an extra 2 months of fasting in only 6 days.

Additionally, it also helps people to catch up with any fasts they've had to miss. If you've had to miss some fasts, they will continue to burden your mind and your soul for the rest of the year. It's also so easy to forget. Having a prescribed time to do them ensures you tie up all your loose ends.

May Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) give you the strength to get through these long fasts amidst all your exam stresses. I know things like Laylatul Qadr and the 6 fasts of Shawwal seem like extra burdens on your long list of tasks to do, but it will help cleanse your mind. You will reap the benefits even more considering you gave that time when you had none to give.

The question is itself inherently wrong. Why? Because Deen and Dunya should never exist in a balance, a balance suggests equity, it suggests items of equivalent weight. To a Muslim, deen should be at the forefront of their lives, their purpose of life should centre around their Deen. In simple terms, Deen to a Muslim is gold and the dunya air, something that comes and goes, entities that can never be equivalent. Saying this, we as Muslims do still have to live our life on this dunya, to sit on that ever-so-short stop before our final destination. So, while we are here, here are a few tips to keep us grounded and to ensure we don't miss the train, preoccupied with the futility that this short life brings.

The greatest deception known to humanity is time, in a famous hadith five things are mentioned, in which people fail to take benefit from, before it is too late. One of those being time.

عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
اغْتَنِمْ خَمْسًا قَبْلَ خَمْسٍ شَبَابَكَ قَبْلَ هَرَمِكَ وَصِحَّتَكَ قَبْلَ سَقَمِكَ وَغِنَاكَ قَبْلَ فَقْرِكَ
وَفَرَاغَكَ قَبْلَ شُغْلِكَ وَحَيَاتَكَ قَبْلَ مَوْتِكَ

شعب الإيمان للبيهقي الزهد وقصر الأمل 9767

Ibn Abbas reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“Take advantage of five before five: your youth before your old age, your health before your illness, your riches before your poverty, your free time before your work, and your life before your death.”

*Shu'ab al-Imān 9767
Sahih according to Al-Albani*

We ourselves know how months and years slip through our fingers before we know it there will come a time when we are awaiting our death, old, frail and perhaps full of regret. The regret of the life we wasted and with Allah (SWT) forgotten.

We must manage our time, the best way to do this is to know where your priorities lie. You'll ask anyone about time, and they'll say they are busy, they don't have time for such and such, prayers are rushed or incomplete and don't even get them started on time to read Qur'an or extra Adhkar. The first thing a Muslim will be held accountable for is prayer as it comes in a Hadith Qudsi*

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ:

"إِنَّ أَوَّلَ مَا يُحَاسَبُ بِهِ الْعَبْدُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنْ عَمَلِهِ صَلَاتُهُ. فَإِنْ صَلَحَتْ فَقَدْ أَفْلَحَ وَأَنْجَحَ، وَإِنْ فَسَدَتْ فَقَدْ خَابَ وَخَسِرَ، فَإِنْ انْتَقَصَ مِنْ فَرِيضَتِهِ شَيْءٌ، قَالَ الرَّبُّ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: انظُرُوا هَلْ لِعَبْدِي مِنْ تَطَوُّعٍ فَيُكَمَّلَ بِهَا مَا انْتَقَصَ مِنَ الْفَرِيضَةِ، ثُمَّ يَكُونُ سَائِرُ عَمَلِهِ عَلَى ذَلِكَ."

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) from the Prophet (ﷺ), who said: Allah (mighty and sublime be He) says:

"The first of his actions for which a servant of Allah will be held accountable on the Day of Resurrection will be his prayers. If they are in order, then he will have prospered and succeeded: and if they are wanting, then he will have failed and lost. If there is something defective in his obligatory prayers, the Lord (glorified and exalted be He) will say: See if My servant has any supererogatory prayers with which may be completed that which was defective in his obligatory prayers. Then the rest of his actions will be judged in like fashion."

It was related by at-Tirmidhi (also by Abu Dawud, an-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah and Ahmad).

Hadith 9, 40 Hadith Qudsi

If you do not know where to begin, then begin there. Timetable your life around your prayer not your prayer around your life. Planning a get together with friends, is there somewhere where you all can pray? Did you leave with your wudu? Simple acts like this not only help a person complete the physical obligation of prayer but also help imprint the remembrance of Allah (SWT).

Remembrance of Allah (SWT) isn't just restricted to prayer of course. Reading Qur'an is the one of the beautiful forms of remembering Allah (SWT), reciting the words of Allah (SWT), words sent down for us and us alone to benefit from. Carrying a Qur'an around isn't ideal when out and about, but that doesn't mean we are restricted. Alhamdulillah, now you can even get Qur'an apps on your phone, ones that even give pop up reminders. What is stopping us from downloading them? Even if you cannot read, listening to Qur'an with translation can help keep Allah's remembrance in our heart to remind us of our priority to our deen and help us ultimately to act in accordance with those principles.

We are now in the blessed month of Ramadan, a month of peace, forgiveness, and repentance. Fasting in Ramadan is one of the five pillars that our faith constitutes of and for students especially, now more than ever, the question of whether to fast whilst studying for exams is imminent. The answer to this I believe can be found in ayat 99 of Surah mu'minun that should send chills down the backs of any believer:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ

When death approaches any of them, they cry, "My Lord! Let me go back,

Surah Al-Mu'minun (23:99)

On the Day of Judgement, when we are stood before our creator, the very reason for our existence, what will we say? That our exams for our dunya lead us to forget about the true exam of the akhirah? That we let our desire for ease overtake a command from Allah (SWT)? Will we be amongst those who beg to be sent back so we can make up those fasts. Brothers and Sisters reading this unless there is a valid excuse according to the sharia* fasting is an obligation. The reward of Ramadan is so great that we cannot afford to miss out, as we do not even know if we will reach the end of this Ramadan never mind a future one.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ

" مَنْ قَامَ لَيْلَةَ الْقَدْرِ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ، وَمَنْ صَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ "

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Whoever established prayers on the night of Qadr out of sincere faith and hoping for a reward from Allah, then all his previous sins will be forgiven; **and whoever fasts in the month of Ramadan out of sincere faith, and hoping for a reward from Allah, then all his previous sins will be forgiven.**"

Sahih al-Bukhari 1901

Now that there is hopefully fear and motivation instilled in anyone considering such a thing, let us now look at what we can do to make fasting and exams a little easier. Firstly, plan your studying around times that you feel you will be most productive during your fast. This is relative to each person, for some, suhoor or early on in the fast is the best, for others maybe after iftar in the wait up to suhoor where they can be snacking and drinking water as they study. Studying alongside other fasting friends can be a form of motivation and means you won't have to see people eating around you, if that is something by which you are affected.

Is it an ideal situation? No, it isn't. Fasting can be difficult, as can trying to work out how to fit Zuhr prayer around a 2pm tutorial or class. Allah (SWT) created this deen to be easy, however, the environments we now inhabit and the lifestyles we adopt can sometimes lead to us having to actively make the decision of putting our dunya first or putting Allah (SWT) first. Whilst you may struggle now, do not forget the life of the dunya is a life of trifle enjoyments and a delusion, do not get caught up in this. Allah sees your struggles and will In Sha Allah, reward all those who strive to truly please him. May Allah (SWT) keep us on the right path and with the correct intentions. Ameen

Junnat Aamir

Extra Notes

*Hadith Qudsi refers to a hadith which is in fact a message from Allah (SWT) directly but simply spoken and conveyed by the Prophet (PBUH). This does sometimes lead to the question of the difference then between Hadith Qudsi and Quran below is a link to the answer to that question outlined nicely

[What are the differences between the Qur'an and a Hadith Qudsi? - Darul Fiqh](#)

*The Sharia reasons for missing fasts are mentioned in many books of Islamic jurisprudence, however the best way to know if your excuse is valid is contacting your local mufti as trying to determine these things on our own can sometimes lead to error.

BADG REFLECTION

Reflecting on this year's Believe and Do Good Campaign (BADG), a FOSIS campaign that GUMSA annually partakes in, which encourages people to do good actions for their community. One of the groups we decided to do good actions for were the homeless.

Over this first year at university, I have spent a lot more time in the city centre and therefore have been more exposed to the homelessness crisis and its related issues within Glasgow. Just within the first month, I saw people inhaling aerosols, I saw people injecting themselves and I saw people lying in the middle of the street being treated by paramedics for drug related issues. Having lived a sheltered life within the suburbs, it was quite different witnessing all this in person compared to watching it in a film, on the news, or discussing it in a school classroom. It is easy to blame the homeless for their circumstances. However, there are many systemic and socio-economic reasons that people with a lack of support end up on the streets. Behind every face on the street is a person and behind every person is a story.

You may have seen a buzz at night under the railway bridge on Argyle St. with people crowding around white tables of food, barbers giving haircuts and people having discussions. This is an initiative set up by the Homeless Project Scotland, with an aim to help end rough sleeping and homelessness in Scotland. They support their service users by ensuring they have sufficient food, clothing, and toiletries to live as comfortably as possible. As part of BADG we held a 'Food and Toiletries Drive' and a 'Help Packs for the Homeless' event where attendees worked together to make packs with essential toiletries and kind messages of support. The first time I saw the Homeless Project Scotland in action, it was enlightening to see that there was an accessible organisation and that it had so many volunteers, especially as this kind of work can be deemed as unsafe.

Many would recognise the danger and have an 'it's not my problem' attitude, creating a barrier for support. It was good to see the council putting in resources to help the project with security guards and police being stationed close by. Dropping the packs off, I got to enter the back, where all the donations are kept, there were so many donations, from not only people like ourselves but also, major supermarkets. There were pots and pots of hot food, freshly made and about to be taken out and distributed. They even have a van donated to them by Arnold Clark to help with deliveries. It is great to see the whole community come together to help one cause.

In the grand scheme of things, I would say I haven't done much to help the homeless but with everyone coming together in the community we can make a substantial difference which is really the essence of BADG. During BADG we also had events/initiatives that helped the university student community and the residents of a local care home. However, good actions are not solely for the month of BADG and I hope that it provides you with inspiration for actions you can do in the rest of the year and continue in the spirit of Believe and Do Good'.

Anonymous

As Allah tells us, **“The month of Ramadan was when the Qur'an was revealed to as a guide for humanity...”** (2:185). But how and when did it ‘reveal’, and why did it coincide with the pre-Islamic month of Ramadan?

Before our cherished Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) was declared a ‘prophet’, it was his meditative practice to retire to a cave called Hira, set in the Mountain of the Light (Jabal al-Nour), just over 5 miles from the Kaaba. On an infamous night, the Prophet Muhammed received a trembling revelation from the angel Gabriel called ‘the Clot’, Quran 96:1-8, after commanding him to ‘read!’ or ‘Iqra!’. This occurred in the month of Ramadan, derived from the word ‘Ramad’ which means dryness of the mouth.

But fasting was not a ‘thing’ in the early years of his Prophethood. Although Muslims could optionally fast on Mondays and Thursdays, it was on the 10th day of Muharram, the 1st month of the ancient Arabian lunar calendar, where fasting was initially made compulsory. Muharram is one of only four holy months mentioned in the Quran, although Ramadan is not one of them. It was recommended to fast on the 10th day of Muharram, called Ashura, as it symbolised the day that Moses and the Israelites crossed the Sea to escape from the tyrant Pharaoh of Egypt and the reward for fasting according to hadith is that the past two years will be forgiven. This understandably is also called ‘day of atonement, Yom Kippur by the Jewish tradition. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) would also fast the day before Ashura and the day after it too.

Later the Quran would be revealed to Prophet Muhammed via the angel Gabriel, through different modes of communication. Sometimes as the dramatic ringing of the bell, sometimes in his sleep, sometimes Gabriel would come in the form of a man. It was by no means an easy duty.

Memorising the revelations as well as writing them down on parchments, palm leaves, bones and slates was a task. And the legacy of these early Muslims is the Quran we have today, the criterion of right and wrong, Alhamdulillah. So let’s celebrate Ramadan by changing our rhythm of life regarding our food, relationships, work and our spiritual mindset to develop a more God-focused life and top it off with Eid al Fitr. Ameen!

References:

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Feeling the pangs of hunger, fatigue and weakness which accompanies Ramadan is both an endurance and an enjoyment. But what happens if you miss your fasts intentionally? Before answering this you need to ask yourself, why do you not want to fast? What is stopping you? Is it exams, stress or not bothered?

O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous

Surah Al-Baqarah (2:183)

To get yourself in a positive mindset you need to look at Ramadan's benefits. As Allah says fasting is 'prescribed' for you, just as a doctor would prescribe healing medicine. Ramadan genuinely spurs speedy spiritual and physical progress, purifies your heart, called 'taqwa', and washes away your sins. Prescription also means 'instructed'.

Of course, there are exceptions to fasting, such as the sick, elderly, pregnant, breastfeeding, women in menstruation and the traveller. Having university exams, or being a professional athlete is not one of them!

[Fasting for] a limited number of days. So whoever among you is ill or on a journey [during them] - then an equal number of other days [are to be made up]. And upon those who are able [to fast, but with hardship] - a ransom [as substitute] of feeding a poor person [each day]. And whoever volunteers good [i.e., excess] - it is better for him. But to fast is best for you, if you only knew.

Surah Al-Baqarah (2:184)

If you break your fast without a valid reason, it is counted as a sin, a bad deed, because you have contravened one of the pillars of Islam (see above verse). The action plan for you is:

1

Ask forgiveness and re-motive yourself. Getting it wrong is the first step to getting it right. Allah says after the verse of fasting:

"And when My servants ask you, [O Muhammad], concerning Me - indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided." (Qur'an, 2:186)

2

Make up for the fast*. This is called 'Kaffarah', meaning atonement or compensation of sins. It is fasting 60 days (2 lunar months specifically) or providing 60 meals to the destitute. This varies between scholars; some say pick one of the three options or fast first if not the latter options etc. The aim is to break and prevent the bad habit.

The ruling of 'Kaffarah' derives from an empathetic discussion between the Prophet (pbuh) and a poor man of Medina.

Narrated Abu Hurairah:

While we were sitting with the Prophet (ﷺ) a man came and said, "**O Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)! I have been ruined.**" Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) asked what was the matter with him. He replied "**I had sexual intercourse with my wife while I was fasting.**" Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) asked him, "**Can you afford to manumit a slave?**" He replied in the negative. Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) asked him, "**Can you fast for two successive months?**" He replied in the negative. The Prophet (ﷺ) asked him, "**Can you afford to feed sixty poor persons?**" He replied in the negative. The Prophet (ﷺ) kept silent and while we were in that state, a big basket full of dates was brought to the Prophet (ﷺ). He asked, "**Where is the questioner?**" He replied, "**I (am here).**" The Prophet (ﷺ) said (to him), "**Take this (basket of dates) and give it in charity.**" The man said, "**Should I give it to a person poorer than I? By Allah; there is no family between its (i.e. Medina's) two mountains who are poorer than I.**" The Prophet (ﷺ) smiled till his premolar teeth became visible and then said, "**Feed your family with it.**"

Sahih al-Bukhari 1936

I know you have the ability to fast and Allah never burdens a believer more than they can endure so with that in mind, give it your all!

*If unsure please consult registered medical advice and consult your local Islamic scholar if wondering the rules of exemption and payments etc.

*According to scholars, and from the British Journal of Family Medicine those who have jobs requiring peak physical health (e.g., surgeons performing complex surgery or airline pilots), are given exemption to delay fasting, called 'Qada', and is expected of a traveller too who misses their fast.

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, all praise is for Allah, and peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of Allah.

The holy month of Ramadan is known to be made up of three stages that all have a different virtue attributed to them. These three stages, consisting of 10 days each, are called Ashras (which means 10 in Arabic). We can know this from the following hadith:

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

“...This is a month (Ramadan), the first part of which brings Allah’s mercy, the middle of which brings His forgiveness and the last part of which brings emancipation from the fire of Jahannam.”

Sahih Ibn Khuzaymah (Hadith 1887)

This hadith is weak; however, weak narrations are acceptable when it comes to virtues. Scholars such as Imam Ibn Salah and Imam Nawawi have always stated that there is a leeway in quoting weak hadiths in virtues of acts. Even Imam Bukhari brought weak narrations in his book “Al-Adab al-Mufrad,” indicating that he also accepts weak narrations regarding virtues of good deeds.

The First Ashra: Rehmah – The Days of Mercy

The first 10 days of Ramadan are days of mercy, so it is recommended to ensure we have mercy towards all our fellow beings. To attain the mentioned favour of Allah in this Ashra it is common to recite the following dua:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَارْحَمْنِي وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

Allahummagh firli war hamni wa anta khayur rahimina

O Allah forgive me and have mercy on me, and You are the best of the merciful

The Second Ashra: Maghfirah – The Days of Forgiveness

The 11th to 20th days of Ramadan make up the second stage of Ramadan. This is a time of forgiveness. In these days one can seek forgiveness from Allah and repent for all their sins. A specific dua is commonly recited in these days to attain this forgiveness:

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ رَبِّي مِنْ كُلِّ ذَنْبٍ وَ أَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ

Astaghfirullah rabbi min kuli dhambiw wa atubu ilayhi

I seek forgiveness in Allah my Rabb from every sin and I turn in repentance to Him

The Third Ashra: Nijat – The Days of Seeking Refuge

The final Ashra of Ramadan is from the 21st to the 29th or 30th day of Ramadan depending on the moon. This ending of Ramadan is about seeking refuge in Allah from the fire of Hell. This final Ashra is of significant importance, and it is in this stage in which Laylatul Qadr falls - a night greater than a thousand months.

`Aisha narrated that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

"Search for the Night of Qadr in the odd nights of the last ten days of Ramadan."

Sahih al-Bukhari 2017

The following dua should be recited in the last 10 nights as per the hadith:

`Aisha narrated that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ عَفُوٌّ تَحِبُّ الْعَفْوَ فَاعْفُ عَنِّي

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

O Allah, You are Forgiving and love forgiveness, so forgive me.

Sunan Ibn Majah 3850, Jami' at-Tirmidhi 3513, Grade: Sahih (Darussalam)

As Muslims we should strive to maximise our worship and follow the example of our Beloved Prophet peace and blessings upon him, in these 10 days. Many Muslims also practice I'tikaf for these last 10 days.

Narrated Aisha:

With the start of the last ten days of Ramadan, the Prophet (ﷺ) used to tighten his waist belt (i.e. work hard) and used to pray all the night, and used to keep his family awake for the prayers.

Sahih al-Bukhari 2024

A common dua recited in this Ashra for protection from Jahannam is:

اللَّهُمَّ أَجِرْنِي مِنَ النَّارِ

Allahumma ajirni minnar

O Allah protect me from Jahannam

Repeating this dua just three times can protect a believer from the Fire of Hell. Also, with the following dua we can get Paradise itself to ask Allah to allow us to enter Jannah.

اللهم اني اسالك الجنة

Allahumma inni as'aluka al-jannah

O Allah, I ask you for Paradise

It was narrated that Anas bin Malik said: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

'Whoever asks Allah for Paradise three times, Paradise will say: 'O Allah, admit him to Paradise.' And whoever seeks protection from Hell three times, Hell will say: 'O Allah, protect him from the Fire.'

Sunan an-Nasa'i 5521, Grade: Sahih (Darussalam)

Although each of the above recitals are not Sunnah for that specific Ashra, there is no harm in reciting these, with the intention of acquiring the aforementioned favours of Allah in the appropriate parts of Ramadan.

I'tikaf

I'tikaf means literally to retreat and Islamically means to enter the mosque with the intention of worship. (*Radd al-Muhtār p.428 v.3*)

Ibn 'Umar (Allah be pleased with both of them) reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) used to observe i'tikaf in the last ten days of Ramadan.

Sahih Muslim 1171a

There are three types of I'tikaf:

- **Wajib:** To vow to enter I'tikaf for the sake of Allah upon the fulfilment of some vow or wish. The least duration of wajib I'tikaf is one day, and night and it must be accompanied by a fast.
- **Sunnah Muakkadah:** To reside the last ten days and nights of Ramadan in the Mosque is Sunnat Muakkadah Al-Kifayah. If a person from the community fulfils it, it will suffice the obligation for the entire community. If not, then all will be sinful.
- **Mustuhub** or **Nafil:** This I'tikaf can be done for any amount of time, even for a few minutes. Fasting is not a condition for this type of I'tikaf. (*Radd al-Muhtār p.430-p.431 v.3*)

Conditions

There are 2 important conditions for I'tikaf:

- The intention
- That you are not in a state of major ritual impurity (anything requiring ghusl)

Permitted things during I'tikaf

Everything that is normally permitted, besides sexual relations. During I'tikaf we should busy ourselves with as many beneficial deeds as possible, such as:

- Voluntary prayer
- Reciting Qu'ran with reflection and passion
- Remembrance of Allah in all forms
- Gaining beneficial knowledge – listening to inspiring religious discourse (which is why it is wise to make I'tikaf in a mosque alongside people of knowledge)

How does I'tikaf end?

When one leaves the mosque or (for women) the place of prayer. During an extended i'tikaf (such as the communal sunnah one), one may leave the mosque:

- For a necessary ghusl
- To perform wudu (if such facilities are not found within the mosque)
- To use the toilet

Leaving for other reasons will end the i'tikaf.

I'tikaf for Women at Home

- It is recommended for women to do I'tikaf in a specific place in their house, a quiet room, for example, whenever they have the time and can do so without neglecting their family duties and other responsibilities.
- The full communal sunnah I'tikaf is for the entire ten days (in the mosque, for men). This is not expected of those working or homemakers, for that matter. If one can arrange things, and their husband agrees, then they may perform i`tikaf for the entire 10 days.
- It is not valid for men to do i'tikaf in other than a mosque.

Breaking I'tikaf

If a person broke a Sunnah I'tikaf, firstly it automatically becomes a nafl I'tikaf and he will have to do qada for that day in which he broke his I'tikaf. In other words, he will only do qada of one day. The qada of this I'tikaf can be done in the month of Ramadan or after. However, some scholars are of the view that it is best to do qada of all the ten days. *References for qada for Itikaf: Ahsanul Fatawa p.502 v.4 & Fatawa Rahimiyah p.110 v.3*

Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: "**Whoever establishes prayers during the nights of Ramadan faithfully out of sincere faith and hoping to attain Allah's rewards (not for showing off), all his past sins will be forgiven.**" (Sahih al-Bukhari 37)

I would advise readers to research I'tikaf further, by speaking to people of knowledge like a local Imam, so that you can make the most of this time.

May Allah give us success to follow the guidance of His Beloved (Allah bless him & give him peace).

And Allah Knows Best.

There are 4 main reasons why Muslims are required to fast Ramadan:

1

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

O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 183

Fasting is an act of worship that strengthens faith. It prevents you from falling into immorality, or persisting in them, and forms a protective barrier for you that protects you from pursuing sins and evils. The piety that fasting achieves, compels the soul to abide by what Allah SWT has commanded, and to avoid what he has forbidden, to protect it from committing that which would lead it to destruction and loss, and to avoid being exposed to Allah's wrath and torment in the Hereafter. Just as the repetition of fasting year after year renews faith, it makes it more solid and stable. The fasting person abstains from his food, drink, and what he desires, to obtain the pleasure of his Lord - the Mighty and Sublime. Therefore, Allah - Glory be to Him - singled out fasting with double reward; to be free of hypocrisy and reputation.

2

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ مِن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ

We never sent a messenger before you 'O Prophet' without revealing to him: "There is no god 'worthy of worship' except Me, so worship Me 'alone'."

Surah Al-Anbya, Verse 25

Achieving the unity of the Islamic Ummah; since the unity of belief and devotion to Allah SWT in his worship is one of the most important things that show the unity of the nation; just as the unification of Allah SWT is the foundation upon which all the heavenly laws are based.

3

Accustoming oneself to giving; the fasting person perceives the needs of the poor and needy, and does good to them, and thus the Muslim community becomes an integrated and merciful one, dominated by mercy and affection.

4

وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

"...and proclaim the greatness of Allah for guiding you, and perhaps you will be grateful."

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 185

We must recognise and appreciate the blessing of guidance to the religion of Islam that Allah has bestowed upon us. Allah's guidance is a blessing that we must appreciate by abstaining from that which is forbidden and adhering to what God Almighty has commanded.

Ramadan Manners

1

Ramadan isn't just about physically fasting but it's also about spiritually cleansing your soul. How many of us have fallen into shaytaan's trap and said any of the following?

"I'm just hangry!"

"Man... leave me be... I'm fasting! SMH!"

"I'm too hungry to read Quran!"

"I saw her drinking water; she isn't really fasting!"

Narrated Abu Hurairah: The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Whoever does not give up forged speech and evil actions, Allah is not in need of his leaving his food and drink (i.e. Allah will not accept his fasting.)"

Sahih al-Bukhari 1903

Keep away from lesions of the tongue; From backbiting, lying, and gossiping.

2

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

"There are two joys for the fasting person: the joy when he breaks his fast, and the joy of when he meets his Lord."

Jami' at-Tirmidhi 766, Grade: Sahih (Darussalam)

Obedience to God SWT and turning to Him throughout the day, is critical when fasting. You must hasten in breaking your fast, then turn to God with thanks and praise. And use the promise of the second joy as motivation to fast to the best of your ability

3

Narrated Abu Hurairah: The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Whoever established prayers on the night of Qadr out of sincere faith and hoping for a reward from Allah, then all his previous sins will be forgiven; and whoever fasts in the month of Ramadan out of sincere faith, and hoping for a reward from Allah, then all his previous sins will be forgiven."

Sahih al-Bukhari 1901

Despite having exams, you must work on your worship and obedience. Do not disobey God after breaking the fast; by satisfying desires with sins that God has forbidden. Make sure you revive the night by praying and performing acts of worship.

Ramadan Manners

4

Abu Hurairah (Allah be pleased with him) reported:

When any one of you gets up in the morning in the state of fasting, he should neither use obscene language nor do any act of ignorance. And if anyone slanders him or quarrels with him, he should say: " I am fasting, I am fasting."

Sahih Muslim 1151a

When you are fasting, you must not pay attention to foolish words and actions that will reduce your reward. You must respond to abuse with kindness and always give people the benefit of the doubt.

5

The aim of Ramadan is to achieve the tenderness of your heart, increase reverence and serenity. This is by God Almighty's forgiveness of sins. These sins lead to hardening of the heart. So you must spend all the time you can, asking for forgiveness and dedicating yourself to worship so that our hearts may once again become soft.

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