

## How to Spend Ramadan

**Ramadan:** The holy month of blessings and virtue will be with us soon inshallah. Its regarded as "Spring Season of Virtues" by the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him). This blessed month's first ten days are entitled as "***Rahmat***" Mercy, next ten days as "***Maghfira***" forgiveness and last ten days as "***Itqun min al-nar***" Freedom from Hell fire.

In this month "***nawafil***" (non-obligatory prayers) measures to ***fard*** (obligatory prayers) in reward and fard increases by seventy times in reward.

This significant month is the best opportunity to pray and earn virtues, to establish strong bond with Almighty Allah (swt), to link ourselves with the Holy Quran, to change our surroundings for goodness and righteousness, to spread good deeds, to spread Da'wah work, to strengthen and train ourselves with faith like a true servant of Allah, to control our desires, to become a *Da'ee* (caller to Allah (swt)) and it is the best time to spend money for the sake of Allah (swt).

The Prophet (PBUH) used to strive hard (in worship) during Ramadan in a way that he did not strive at any other times.

Here are some tips of things we can do during Ramadan (and even after wards).

### 1. Clean up your time:

**a) Techno Free Ramadan:** Don't forget, technology is the best time killer. Try to minimize your techno-related activities. If you are used to post on Facebook, twitter have a short break or at least put 15 minutes time limit and try to spend less time on the internet and computer. Use your mobile on silent mode and decrease your chat and SMS on the phone. Inform your friends that you'll be less active in this month.

**b) Cooking:** Try to cook something simple during Ramadan as this is a month of 'Ibadah & Qur'an, not a month of food. There are some husbands who push their wives to cook different varieties of food, or sisters have to spend their time in the kitchen due to many visitors.

**c) Shopping:** Try to get all your shopping done before Ramadan if possible. Make a list of the items, that is enough for one month and buy it all together. If not possible, do your best to make shopping as fast as possible. Try to do the Eid shopping before the last ten days. The last ten days of Ramadan when we have to be doing more 'ibadah and spend our time in doing good deeds, some Muslims are busy with doing shopping for Eid and their kids. These ten days, we have to increase our 'ibadah and to catch Laylat al-Qadr.

**d) Iftar dinners:** Iftar dinners are very common. One should be aware of what waste is and what dinner is. We have the rest of the full year to do parties and nice dinners to get socialized, we should not exaggerate them. Indeed it's a great reward to break someone's fast but try to give food to people who are needy and poor. The Noble

Prophet (SAW) said, Whoever gives food to a fasting person to break his fast, will have equal reward, without reducing the reward of the fasting person.” (al-Tirmidhi).

**e) Sleeping:** Decrease the time of sleep during this month. It's a month of 'ibadah and doing good deeds. Who knows, this could be our last Ramadan. Try to reduce your sleeping hours but not less than minimum hours (e.g. 6 hours) as sleepy head cannot get concentration. It's only one month and then you can get back to your normal routine again.

Now when we have cleaned up a big amount of time, let's schedule it for 'ibadah.

### **1. Make a Ramadan plan**

Be it reading the entire Quran, ensuring you pray taraweeh every night or inviting families over for iftaar; make a list of things you would like to achieve in the month and then how you plan on achieving these goals. It is important that goals are realistic and it is better that your life doesn't need to entirely take a different road in this month (i.e. take the month off work or change work hours etc.) so that you may continue to do these deeds after Ramadan. Knowing what you want to achieve in the month will help you stay focused. Ensure you plan your day every night before you sleep when Ramadan starts (try to continue this even after Ramadan).

#### **Example: Quran Reading Plan :**

The Quran has 600 pages approx. If you divide it by 30 days, that's 20 pages a day.

You're thinking that's difficult to do right?

But, if you divide it by 5 prayers a day, it gets easier:

If you read 4 pages after every salah in Ramadhan, then you've completed the Quran.

If you want to complete the Quran twice, you read 4 pages before and after every salah.

### **2. Control your tongue**

Ramadan is a time where we must control our desires (nafs) aswell as our tongues. Fasting is to refrain from more than just what we consume in our mouth. Start working on your patience. Controlling the anger is essential to get reward for fasting. Anger is bitter to swallow (Unfortunately it does not come in different flavours) but reward is great. Bite your tongue, count to 10 if you're having a hard day. If someone's out to give you a bad time, just be patient. Be extra vigilant with your conversations: ensure you are not backbiting, slandering or talking about useless things.

### **3. Say 'good bye' to bad habits**

Know what bad habits you have and stop them from now, don't wait until Ramadan begins. If you sleep late, start sleeping early, if you are a Facebook junky start cutting

down, have a coffee craze, slow it down etc. It might sound much easier said than done, but once you've committed yourself, purified your intentions – make sincere dua for guidance. Insh'Allah, these bad habits will be easier done with than you ever expected.

#### **4. Change your diet habits**

Imam Al-Shafi said: I have not filled myself in sixteen years because filling oneself makes the body heavy, removes clear understanding, induces sleep and makes one weak for worship.

Many of us fast during Ramadan fast during the day and after Iftaar make up for all the food we missed throughout the day by binge eating.

Surely this goes against the very purpose of Ramadan which is to be moderate in eating and to remember those who have less than us.

By controlling what we eat now we will not only benefit our health in the short and long term but moderate eating will make us less heavier and enable us to maximise the amount of worship we do every day during Ramadan and the rest of our lives. Try to change your food habits from now. Keep in mind that you do not have to eat everything in iftaar. You do not have to eat a lot of dates (just one is enough every day).

**5. Offer All Fard, Sunnah and Nafil Prayers:** Pray the obligatory salah on time with Jama'ah in the Masjid and also perform all sunnah and nafal prayers as well. Get yourself ready as soon as the salah comes in. Think that you are you are standing before your Lord Almighty.

**6. Make up Qadha Prayers:** It is a nice time to make up previous missed prayers. One easy way is to make qadha of one (or more) prayer just before or after each Fard Salaah.

**7. Read Qur'an with Understanding:** Ramadan is the month of the Qur'an. Try to schedule all the moments you have. If you are working, try to keep a pocket size Qur'an with you and read it whenever you get the time, like lunch break, coffee break, lunch break, etc. And it is very important that we should try to read Holy Quran with Tafseer even it is one page daily. Try to read with reflection. Do Tilawah slowly in a beautiful voice and reflect on its meaning.

**8. Perform Taraweeh and Qiyaam ul- Layl:** Pray the taraweeh in the masjid regularly where you will have a chance to listen the entire Quran in just one month.

**9. Perform Tahajjud:** Try to get up a little earlier to pray at least 2 rak'ah and make du'a. It's the best time for making du'a, repentance and acceptance of prayers.

While standing in Qiyam-ul-Lail/Tahajjud don't just pray using the shorter Surahs that you know. Try to make your prayers longer, deeper and meaningful. If you are familiar

with longer Surahs, read the translation and explanation and then pray reciting these Surahs, carefully reflecting on the meaning while you pray.

Even if you are only familiar with the shorter Surahs, read the translation and explanation beforehand, and then pray reflecting on the message of the Surahs.

This is a good way to develop the habit of concentration, even in regular prayers, where many of us tend to be fidgety and/or easily distracted.

**10. Month of Dua:** Write all the du'as you want to make for yourself, your children, family, friends or any du'a that you want to make. Each day try to focus on it and keep on repeating it throughout the day and at times when the du'a is more likely to be accepted e.g. Time of Iftar. Find du'as of Prophets from the Qur'an; Learn and memorise Dua's of our beloved Prophet (PBUH). Ask yourself what you really want from Allah (swt). Make a list of each and everything, no matter how small or how big it is (provided it is Halal or permissible), whether it deals with this world or not. Allah loves to hear from us. Once this list is ready, you can do three things:

- Ask Allah (swt) to give you those things
- Think about what actions you have taken to get those things
- Develop a work plan to get those things in future.

One of the best times to do this is during the last part of the night.

Abu Huraira, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Prophet said: When the last one-third of the night remains, our Lord, the Glorious One descends towards the heaven of the earth and proclaims: Who is that who supplicates for Me, and I grant his supplication? Who is that who begs Me for anything and I grant it to him? And who is that who seeks My forgiveness, and I forgive him? (Bukhari, Muslim).

That means for instance, waking up one hour before Suhoor time to ask Allah for anything and everything you want that is Halal. This can be done using the Duas of the Sunnah, but also Dua in your own language, with sincerity and conviction.

**11. Do Dhikr and Dua's of the Prophet (PBUH):** Select some dhikr, masnoon duas, reflect on the meaning. [get a Du'a book for detailed du'as and dhikr] A lot of small books are available which are very useful.

**12. Charity & Generosity in Ramadan :** The Prophet (P.B.U.H) said, "The best charity is that given in Ramadan." (At-Tirmithi).

Our beloved Prophet (PBUH) was always generous especially in the month of Ramadan.

Calculate your Zakat carefully. Make arrangements to give your Zakat/Sadaqat/Fitra on time.

Prophet (P.B.U.H) said, "He who feeds a fasting person will gain the same reward as he will, without decreasing from the fasting person's rewards." (Ahmad).

Try to give as much charity as you can as the reward gets more during the month of Ramadan. Give food to the poor and the needy and help those in need

### **13. Time Off from work (if possible) in the last ten days**

We take a break from our jobs for almost everything in the life. Why not this time to focus on worshipping and thanking our Creator. If this is not possible at least take a few days off if you can. This can make it easier to stay awake at night to do extra Ibadah, not having to worry about getting to work the next day. It will also facilitate doing Itikaf.

### **14. I'tikaf.**

It was a practice of the Prophet to spend the last ten days and nights of Ramadan in the masjid for I'tikaf.

If you have other social obligations in which there is no alternative available e.g dependent elders/children who need you most of the time then itikaaf is not recommended.

### **15. Seeking Lailatul Qadr**

The Prophet (PBUH) said "Seek Lailatul-Qadr in the odd nights of last ten days of Ramadan (21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, 29th nights).

Abu Huraira (RA) narrated that the Messenger (PBUH) said: Whoever stands (in prayer) in Laylatul Qadr with Imaan (Faith) and with fear of accountability, expecting reward from Allah, will have all of his previous sins forgiven. [Bukhari and Muslim).

Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, 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.' "(Ahmad, Ibn Majah, and Tirmidhi).

The transliteration of this Dua is "Allahumma innaka 'afuwwun tuhibbul 'afwa fa'fu 'annee"

### **16. Get your sins wiped out.**

Do a sincere Tauba (repentance) this Ramadan and get your previous sins wiped out.

Follow the conditions of tauba which include:

- To stop committing sins
- To feel sorry for sins already committed
- To decide not to repeat any sin again

But if the sin is related to the violation of other people's rights, then Tauba (repentance) requires a fourth condition which is giving compensation to the victim e.g. if it is a property, he should return it to its owner, if it is slandering or backbiting, one should ask pardon from the victim.

One should repent from all sins otherwise tauba will not be valid.

### **17. Finish reading a book on the Prophet (PBUH)**

Read about the Prophet's life, which can increase your love for him and Islam by seeing how much he struggled for Allah's sake. It may inspire you to push yourself even harder during these last ten nights.

### **18. Alternative for those who are unable to fast**

Do an alternative if you are unable to fast. If you're among the group of people who are exempted or can delay fasting -- Due to long travel, illness, menstruating women and women with post-partum bleeding; pregnant and nursing women; people who are not capable of fasting, either due to old age or incurable diseases -- there's still something to be gained.

### **19. Evaluate yourself (Ihtisaab)**

Ask yourself those questions that need to be asked. Do an evaluation of where you are and where you are going. Let this evaluation lead you to feel happiness for the good you have done and remorse for the bad you have done. This latter feeling should make it easier to seek Allah's sincere forgiveness when making the Dua.

### **20. Plan for the next year**

Once you've done a self-evaluation, you can plan on where you want to go, at least in the next 12 months. Laylatul Qadr is a great night to be thinking about this (without taking away from your worship), since you'll Insha Allah, be in a more contemplative state. You may choose to dedicate one night of power for evaluation and one night for planning for the next year.