



Ramadan Study Circle

The opportunity to learn, connect, and
spiritually grow with your family during
the month of Ramadan

WEEK 3





ISLAMIC SOCIETY OF BRITAIN
PRESENTS

*A 30-day study circle
programme*

This pack consists of:

- A series of reminders
- Tafsir on short surahs of the Quran
 - Attributes of God
- Short stories of the Prophet (pbuh)

Version 1.0



How to Use this Pack

- This resource has been created in order to allow families to come together during Ramadan and hold a study circle.
- The purpose of this is to help bring families together in worship and remembrance of God in a constructive and aided way, especially at a time when it is difficult for us to be together as families and friends, and in places of worship.
- This resource can be used as an aid or as a comprehensive guide. No prior level of knowledge is required. You may use the information provided as little or as much as you feel necessary, at your own discretion.
- We would suggest that families sit together regularly, every day during Ramadan to do the circle in order to benefit from this circle. Set a fixed time every day if you can!
- The circle is designed to take 30 minutes. This can of course be extended to suit interests and circumstances.
- We would encourage families to take a circle regularly with wider family or friends through online interfaces. This will bring together families regularly in worship and the remembrance of God.
- Each pack covers a week of Ramadan. To obtain the next pack please visit isb.org.uk.
- For your ease, each day is divided into 3 sections. This includes the following: Quran, a story with a message from Islam, a reminder or reflection and a summary of one of the 99 names of God.



We hope you will find this guide can structure some of the worship we commit to in Ramadan but also help us in staying connected as families and friends, growing closer to God.





The Islamic Society of Britain is a community based national charity. We are a membership organisation, with members spread across the whole of the UK. Established in 1990, we were one of the first organisations that sought to evolve a uniquely British flavour to Islam. In order for this to happen we felt that Muslims would have to think seriously about understanding their faith in a British context.

Our aims are:

- To promote greater understanding and awareness of Islam*
- To organise, educate and enhance the development of British Muslim communities*
- To encourage positive contribution to British society and the promotion of social justice*



The Islamic Society of Britain has four key areas of focus over the coming two years:

- Connecting families & building brotherhood/sisterhood*
- Developing youth and young adults*
- Encouraging social action*
- Developing and enhancing civic engagement*

Our youth section (11-17) is called Young Muslims

Our young adult (18-26) section is called Campus

Please do become a member or join our mailing list

isb.org.uk

isbcampus.org.uk

ymuk.net

info@isb.org.uk

0300 365 10 9 8

Glossary

- Hadith*** Refers to reports of what Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said and did (literally: statements or talk).
- Islam*** Has two meanings intertwined, 'peace' and to 'give one's will to God'.
- Pbuh*** Peace be upon him
- Quran*** The Muslim scripture (literally: Recitation).
- Ramadan*** The 9th month of the Islamic calendar, when Muslims observe fasting.
- Salah*** Ritual prayer, alone or in a group (literally: link or communication).
- Sawm*** Fasting. The fast begins before sunrise and ends at sunset each day

Sunnah

The practice and traditions of Prophet Muhammad (literally: trodden path).

Surah

A chapter of the Quran (literally: divider).

Tafsir

Commentary of the Quran.

Zakat

A charitable contribution of 2.5% donated to the poor and needy (literally: purification).





Video Conferencing Guide

Family meetups are usually a prominent feature of our lives during Ramadan. Due to the current circumstances, however, this is not feasible for many of us. Thankfully, it is still possible to connect with family members who do not live in the same household and organise study circles with them, through the utilisation of video conferencing facilities.

These facilities allow the user to create a secure, virtual 'room' into which they can invite family, friends, and anyone else they wish. The invitees can then connect to the room using a variety of different devices, but ideally one with a microphone, a speaker/audio output, and a camera. When a user is connected, it is entirely within their discretion whether or not they allow their video and/or audio feed to be broadcasted.

The content for the circles can then be broadcasted in real time by one of the members of the group. This is done through the use of the 'screen-share' feature. In the context of a study circle, this allows for all members of the group to see the same text and images of this booklet at the same time, so that they are able to follow what is being said or commented on. The circle can then proceed as normal.

There are many different software solutions which offer conferencing software. A few of these are listed below:

Platform	Price	Link to use/download	Notes
Skype	Free	https://www.skype.com/en/get-skype/	
Google Hangouts	Free	https://hangouts.google.com/	Requires a Google account. Without a G-Suite account, video calls with up to 10 people are supported.
Google Hangouts Meet	Free*	https://gsuite.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/pricing.html	Please note that Google Hangouts Meet is a different service from Google Hangouts (above). *Hangouts Meet will be made free by Google from 'early May' until 30/09, meaning that anyone with a Google account will be able to host and schedule meetings.
Zoom	Free*	https://zoom.us/	*The free versions supports group calls up to 40 mins only.

15

DAY 15

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of God, the Most Gracious,
the Most Merciful*



Reminder 1: Paradise

Reminder 2: Tribulations in Makkah

99 Names of God: Al Muizz

Reminder 1: Paradise

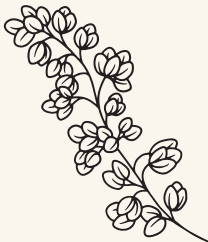
Prophet (pbuh) said: “When the month of Ramadan starts, the gates of heaven are opened and the gates of hell are closed and the devils are chained.”

(Bukhari)

This is a month flowing with blessings!

Have you wondered why it is so easy to fast in Ramadan, why it is so easy to do good deeds and why committing sins is harder? We all have an inner voice that whisper inclinations to us but God wishes to make our lives that bit easier by chaining them up for us.

The gates of heaven are open and so, many people will be rewarded with paradise this month. The gates of hell are closed and so, many people will have been saved from it this month.



Reminder 2: Tribulations in Makkah

The Prophet (pbuh) was from Makkah. It was the place he belonged, the place where everyone knew his name, the place he called home.

When the Prophet (pbuh) started to preach his message of monotheism, of social justice and dynamic cultural change, most people were unaware of the groundswell of support that he attained from those around him. Much like a grassroots campaign, in its initial stage it was discounted as an ideology that wouldn't take hold.

By the time the proclamation was made public, the ruling elite of Makkah were aghast to see that the rug had been pulled from under their feet. The level of support the Prophet (pbuh) had garnered within those early days was incomprehensible to them. The young, the old, the rich, the poor all came in varying degrees to join him. Everyday his followers swelled in their ranks. Here was a problem that was not going to disappear silently into the night. Once every trick in their comprehensive toolbox of governance had been exhausted and the response to their efforts to bribe the Prophet (pbuh) was totally rebuffed.

The die had been cast, now there was no recourse left for the enemies of the Prophet (pbuh), so the persecution began. In a time where we are too often met with the visual impact of wars in Syria, pogroms in Myanmar and the mass disenfranchisement of swathes of humanity. We may have become desensitised to human suffering.

But even in this modern context the amount of grief and trauma faced by the early Muslim communities in Makkah is hard to comprehend. Disappearances, torture and assault were commonplace. The ratcheting up of this persecution involved stripping the community of their property, their recourse to justice and finally ousting them into a stateless starvation in the desert.

A survivor of the death camps in Bosnia explained that one of the worst things he faced, the thing that he felt had been the most traumatic to deal with in those camps, was knowing the faces of his persecutors. He saw his childhood friends, even his school teachers beat, maim, kill. Nothing remained safe, no relationship sacred.

How true this was for the Muslims facing persecution in Makkah, the social order of their lives dismembered, their homes no longer places of sanctuary or succour.

At this time the Prophet (pbuh) suffered immeasurably. He lost his greatest companion, his wife Khadijah (ra) through the burdens of deprivation that had been placed upon her. His darkest hour.

Through all this pain, the Prophet (pbuh) maintained his just character and alleviated the suffering of those around him with kind words and gentle hands. He sought reconciliation and prayed for salvation with the words of God in his heart. "By time, indeed mankind is in loss except those who have faith and do righteous deeds, and enjoin one another to the truth, and enjoin one another to patience" Quran (103). Knowing full well the promise of God; after hardship comes ease.

99 Names of God: The Honourer



الْمُعِزُّ
عَسَىٰ حَلَالُهُ
نَجَلًا



Al Muizz The Honourer

'Those who take the unbelievers for guardians rather than the believers: do they seek honour from them? Surely all honour belongs to God'

Qur'an (4:139)

Al Muizz stems from the Arabic root ' 'z-z' which has the classical Arabic connotations of being 'mighty, strong and powerful', 'elevated and noble,' 'honourable', 'invincible,' 'respected and cherished,' and 'precious.' The name Al Aziz also stems from the same root, meaning the mighty, who subdues and is never subdued. Muizz is the opposite of 'mudhill'- the 'dishonourer.' Muizz is similar to, but much more intensive and glorious than Rafi (uplifter.) Linguistically, 'ma'azza' the noun, derived from the verb 'yu'izz' means power, strength and might. Al Muizz conveys the meaning of the One who honours whomever He pleases from amongst His servants. He is the One who empowers the prophets by protecting them, granting them victory and raising their status among their people. He honours the ones who obey Him whatever their status, colour or background.

Al Muizz is the One who gives invincible strength and honour. He makes it possible for someone or something to be respected, cherished and mighty. The Almighty places one who persists in praising His Name in the centre of honour, instilling love and respect for Him in people's hearts.

Imam Ali ibn al-Husain Zayn al-Abidin is quoted saying, "If one desires to be honoured even though his tribe is not distinguished, or to be held in high esteem even though he has no authority, or to be a man whose wealth does not diminish, he should get out of the humiliation of disobedience and enter into the honour of obeying his Lord."



KEY MESSAGES



- God has made it easier for us to fast during Ramadan. He has prevented Shaytan from reaching us as easily.
- Therefore, it is so much easier for us to do good.



- No nation has gone before us that has not been tested by God. To maintain hope in a time of manifest helplessness, we must understand that patience in adversity is the hallmark of our faith in God and His salvation.
- The Prophet (pbuh), who was born in Makkah, shocked the rulers by gaining support from many people.
- Many people tried to dissuade the Prophet (pbuh) from his task or trick him into stopping, but he remained steadfast and delivered God's message.
- Many of the prophet's companions were tortured and stripped of their homes.
- Instead of replying with hurtful words or violence, the Prophet sought peace and understood that with any hardship would come times of ease, as promised by God.



- God is the Honourer.
- This means that God is the most respected and has unfathomable strength.
- God protects all, including his prophets, by granting victory and honouring those who worship Him.

16

DAY SIXTEEN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of God, the Most Gracious,
the Most Merciful*



Reminder 1: People of Taqwa

Reminder 2: The Quran Journey

Reminder 3: Whose call are we going to answer?

Reminder 4: Migration to Abyssinia

Reminder 1: People of Taqwa

'O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become people of taqwa (the pious).'

Quran (2:183)

In this verse God clarifies the purpose of fasting - to gain taqwa (God consciousness). How does Ramadan train us to become God-conscious? Perhaps because, for a whole month, day after day, we hold back from bodily desires so that every time we think, "Oh, I really would like a drink or a chocolate," we suddenly remember that even though we could sneak into a cupboard and have a quick nibble of something, we are fasting for God and He is watching us, and even if nobody else knows we are eating, yet He is well-aware of our every action.

In addition, we are constantly on the lookout to do good and help people because it will be rewarded many times over. Anger is another 'desire' – it is an impulse that suddenly comes to us, and again we remember God, and remember that we will diminish our fast if we abuse someone or get angry or hurt someone with our words or actions. This constant remembering that God watches and being careful to not displease Him, gradually, over the space of a month, strengthens us in taqwa.

Reminder 2: The Quran Journey

Where & when did the Quran come

- It descended from 'Law Al Mahfudh' The Preserved Tablet to the lowest heaven, Bayt Al 'Izzah.
- From there, Angel Jibrail brought the first revelation to the Prophet (pbuh) in Cave Hira.
- The first revelation was during Laylat Al Qadr.

Memorisation

Many people took up the honour of memorising the entire Quran, which acted as the most certain way of preserving God's word – hence the name Hafiz- a preserver, safe keeper.

Different readings in the early days

Because each region spoke their own dialect of Arabic, to allow the transformation to have impact the Prophet (pbuh) allowed different tribes to keep different readings, using words that they were familiar with.

In Medina there was a consensus in the reading of the Quran as it was read five times a day, in portions, since the time of the Prophet. Then, it was read in its entirety, collectively, from the time of 'Umar (ra) in tarawih, with the agreement of all the companions present in the Prophet's mosque.

Transcription and arrangement of the Quran

- The Prophet (pbuh) had 65 companions scribes and would call them to write down the revelation, the moment it was received.
- Each segment was written on whatever material was available, as it was revealed – scapulae, leather, wood, etc.
- These small fragments were easy to pass around and become aid memoirs for the companions.
- Segments were put together into surahs, other times they were moved around, all under the instruction of the Prophet (pbuh) who was instructed by Angel Jibrail.
- Every Ramadan the Prophet (pbuh) would review the Quran with Angel Jibrail.
- In the last Ramadan, he went over it twice.

Compilation of the Quran

- A number of companions had their own complete collections of the Quran – e.g. Ali, Ubay bin Ka'b and Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (ra).
- After a battle in which many huffaz were martyred, Umar persuaded Abu Bakr (ra) to instruct the Quran to be officially collected.
- Word went around to bring in all the fragments.
- Zayd bin Thabit, a learned linguist of Medina, an Ansar and scribe of the Prophet (pbuh), was appointed to compile all the written fragments after securing two witnesses to affirm that each fragment had been dictated in front of the Prophet (pbuh).
- This copy was kept with the daughter of 'Umar', the Prophet's wife, Hafsa for safe keeping.
- The fragments were kept with Aisha.

Standardisation of the Quran

The variant readings that the Prophet (pbuh), in his wisdom and leniency, had permitted for distant tribes, started to cause problems as some companions could not understand how there could be more than one version of the Quran.

To ensure that this did not set a precedent for further variations to evolve as had occurred in previous scriptures, Uthman (ra), on advice, commissioned an official copy to be compiled afresh. For such a critical task, he appointed a committee, led by Zayd once again, but also included sahaba from the Quraysh tribe – since the Quran was revealed in their dialect. All the original source material was reviewed and validated.

Multiple copies of the validated Quran were made and issued across the empire with instructions that the variants were to be destroyed.



Reminder 3: Whose call are we going to answer?

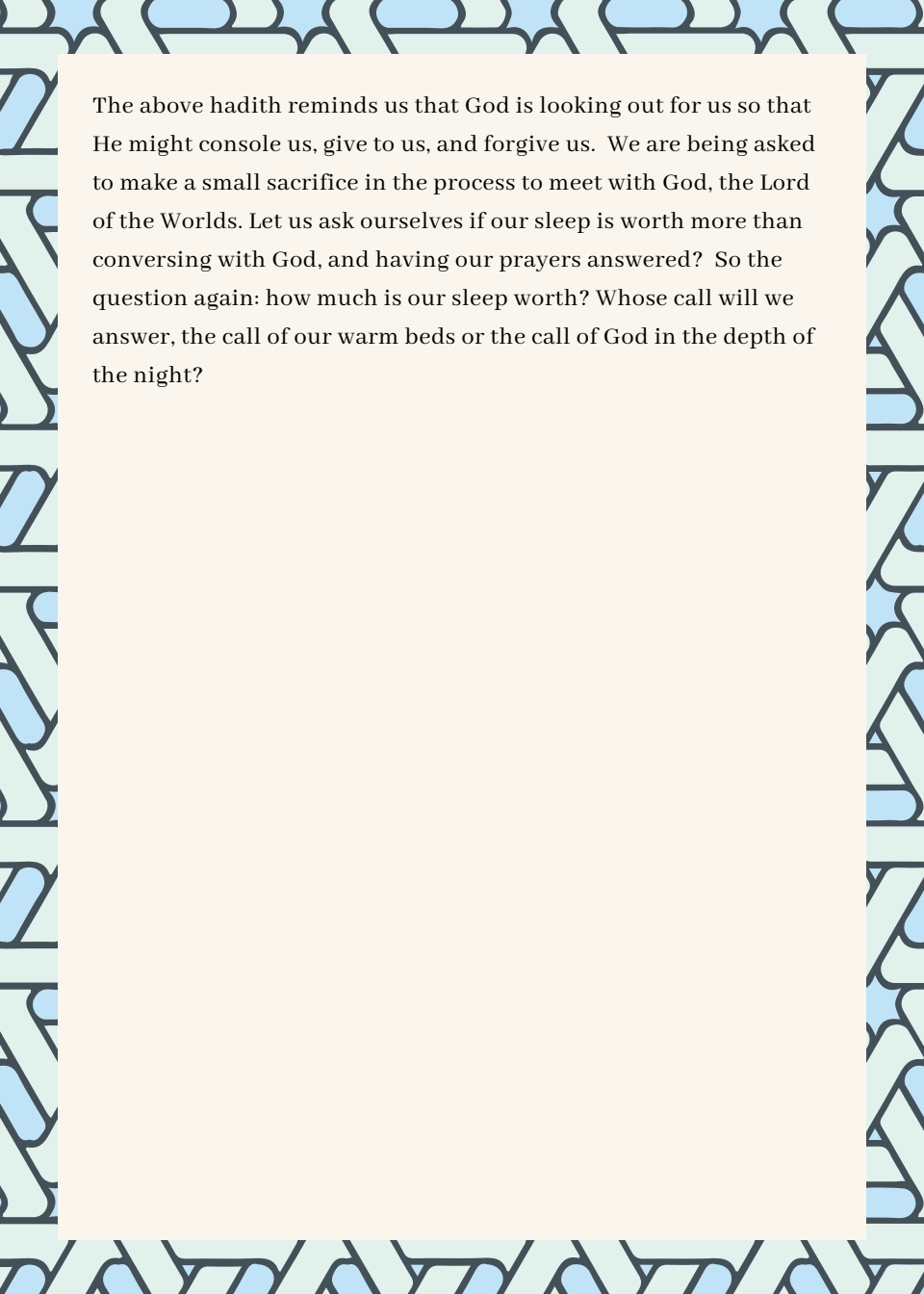
Do we love our sleep? I am guessing we all do – I suppose it's called 'beauty sleep' for a reason! Can we put a price or value on our sleep? Ramadan in the spring and summer months brings us long days and short nights. When our suhoor (meal just before we begin our fast) is only a few hours after the iftar (meal to end our fast) of the previous day – sleep becomes even more precious! Many of us are exhausted by fasting during Ramadan, and it can be difficult to motivate ourselves to wake up at night to pray and worship.

However, let us remind ourselves about the amazing benefits of sacrificing some sleep during the night:

It was narrated from Abu Hurairah that the Messenger (pbuh) said: "Our Lord descends every night to the lowest heaven when the last third of the night remains, and He says: 'Who will call Me that I might answer him, who will ask of Me that I might give to him, who will ask My forgiveness, that I might forgive him?'"

(Bukhari & Muslim)

God tests people in this world in different ways, and there really is no doubt that we are all going through some form of a test right now. Our tests come in different shapes and sizes, sometimes there are many, and sometimes few. Have we ever thought of why this happens and what God, the Most Merciful, wants from all of this? Perhaps our trials are the very thing that keeps us close to God. We can reflect on the trials that many prophets went through.



The above hadith reminds us that God is looking out for us so that He might console us, give to us, and forgive us. We are being asked to make a small sacrifice in the process to meet with God, the Lord of the Worlds. Let us ask ourselves if our sleep is worth more than conversing with God, and having our prayers answered? So the question again: how much is our sleep worth? Whose call will we answer, the call of our warm beds or the call of God in the depth of the night?

Reminder 4: Migration to Abyssinia

At the time that the persecution in Makkah had reached its zenith a lifeline was handed to the Muslims.

The Christian King of Abyssinia (modern day Ethiopia) was known for his benevolent nature. It was to this kingdom that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) sent a cohort of the most vulnerable amongst his followers. The genius of the Prophet (pbuh) lay in the man he sent to speak on their behalf.

The Arabs were known for their eloquence and poetry, they had a command on rhetoric and valued language as a treasured gift. But even amongst this linguistically illustrious society there were individuals who stood out for their ability to speak. Jafar Ibn Abi Talib was such a man and this was his moment. His words would determine the survival of Muslims.

When the Muslims arrived in the Court of the Abyssinian Negus they were met with a fair amount of suspicion; Abyssinia had important trade links and diplomatic alliances with the Arab tribes, any steps taken in supporting this band of 'usurpers' would invariably lead to a rift.

The cards were stacked against the Muslims from the outset, the emissary from Makkah, who had arrived at the court, had spent his time fruitfully bending their ears towards Makkah's claim, that Negus was dealing with a band of rebels that denied the legitimacy of the Christian God.

As was the akhlaq and adab (morality and manners) of the time, Negus felt honour bound to hear the complaint of the Muslims. Jafar spoke beautifully about how a Prophet had come to mankind with a message of peace. An illiterate man who had been given the gift of a book in which were the words of God.

A Prophet had come to lift mankind up from the mire of ignorance, to restore the natural order of humanity. To raise women up to the equal of men. To support those who were downtrodden and enslaved. To restore the faith of mankind as the Prophets had done before him, from Adam to Ibrahim, from Moses to Jesus (peace be upon them all).

The Negus was stunned by his eloquence and enquired how he knew these names. He was told that they were names in the Quran.

Now all eyes and ears were upon the delegation of Muslims, standing in the court, Jafar had managed with his words to open those eyes and ears that hitherto had been closed.

But could he open their hearts too? Or can God alone open hearts? The Negus asked what the Quran said about the birth of Jesus. This is where Jafar proved his mettle. Knowing that this was no fait accompli, everything rested on his next few words. Could he muster the eloquence and depth to move the hearts of these men and win a reprieve for his people?

Jafar had the intelligence and humility to know that he could not conjure any words from within himself, only God's words would do!

He began to recite surah Al Maryam (19).

Not a dry eye remained in the room, a hush of awe and wonder hung in the air. The Negus approached Jafar and his companions. Everyone knew before he even spoke, that God had saved them.

Discussion points

If we need to communicate about Islam to others what skills do we need? How important is it to understand who we are speaking to; how we will communicate and who is the best person to do that communication.

KEY MESSAGES



- Ramadan allows us to remain God conscious as every restraint we have leads back to God's request for us to fast.
- Even when it comes to anger, we understand we should prevent ourselves from saying bad things.



- The Quran was brought to the Prophet (pbuh), by the Angel Jibrail in Cave Hira during Laylat Al Qadr.
- Many scribes would come and write a verse down once it had been revealed.
- Zayd bin Thabit arranged all these written fragments to be compiled. In order to ensure there were no variations, many companions of the Prophet (pbuh) looked over it.



- It has been said that through the night, God descends to the lowest of heavens and draws close to us in order to hear our prayers.
- Trials, such as the ones we are all enduring now, including COVID-19 are often what keep us close to God. All the Prophets endured struggles but remained God conscious throughout.



- Due to a lot of persecution in Makkah, many Muslims made a journey to be protected by the Christian King of Abyssinia.
- Despite having pacts with the Arabs in Makkah, one of the Prophet's companions spoke beautifully about what Islam stood for; rights for women, to help those who had limited voices and restore the religion of previous prophets.
- The Negus was stunned by the explanation and recognised many names such as Adam and Ibrahim. When he heard the verses about Maryam, the Negus approached the companions and of course, gave them the protection they were seeking.

17

DAY SEVENTEEN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of God, the Most Gracious,
the Most Merciful*



Reminder 1: Making the Quran our friend

Reminder 2: Hope

Reminder 3: The Importance of Prayer

99 Names of God: Al Wadud

Reminder 1: Making the Quran our friend

1. Connect intimately with 'your' Quran

- Recite it
- Revise it (review and refresh your memorisation)
- Learn the translation
- Learn enough Arabic that you can start to feel the meaning as you read it
- Use an app that gives you word for word translation

“You must remain alive to the reality that, while you are reading the Quran, you are in the very presence of Him who has sent these words to you. For, God is always with you, wherever you are, whatever you are doing. His knowledge is all encompassing.”

(Way to the Qur'an, Khurram Murad)

2. Enjoy reading the Quran – connect to the rhythm and melody

“No single word in English can express the full meaning of tartil. In Arabic it means reading without haste, distinctly, calmly, in measured tone, with thoughtful consideration, wherein tongue, heart and limbs are in complete harmony.”

(Way to the Qur’an, Khurram Murad)

“Tartil, as opposed to hasty babbling, manifests reverence and awe, allows for reflection and understanding, and makes an indelible impression upon on the soul.”

(Way to the Qur’an, Khurram Murad)

Abdullah Ibn Abbas is reported to have said “I consider reading surahs Al Baqarah and Al Imran with tartil better for me than reading the entire Quran hastily and reading (small) surahs like Al Zalzalah and Al Qari’ah with tartil and reflection is better than reading surahs Al Baqarah and Al Imran.”

- Read with tartil – slowly, with rhythm.
- Without savouring your reading, you limit the benefit.
- Read with quality over quantity.
- Try copying a Qari, if you don’t have time to learn tajwid in Ramadan.

“One who is skilled in reading the Quran is with the noble, virtuous angels who bring down the revelation; One who falters while reading it and finds it hard to read correctly, will have a double reward.”

(Bukhari and Muslim)

3. Redefine your expectations – shorter but deeper (Tadabbur)

'And verily We have coined for mankind in this Quran all kinds of parables that haply they may reflect'

Quran (39:27)

'(This is) a Scripture that We have revealed unto thee, full of blessing, that they may ponder its verses, and that men of understanding may reflect.'

Quran (38:29)

- The Quran was revealed in small chunks so it could be internalised and implemented.
- It states again and again that the ordinary man should reflect and take lessons, take heed (tadhakkur).
- There is additional reward for trying to look deeper and think hard and derive fresh insights – tadabbur i.e. study the tafsir, the deeper meanings of each word and how they relate to each other and the neighbouring verses.
- If the Quran speaks to each person, people and each age, it means that fresh meanings will keep emerging.
- Some of these will be a meaning just for you.
- It will increase your love for God and the word of God.



Reminder 2: Hope

“There are those in the month of Ramadan, in every day and night, to whom God grants freedom from the fire, and there is for every Muslim a supplication which they can make and will be granted.”

(Ahmed)

The holy Prophet (pbuh) reassures us with such hope here. There are many people who are given what they want in every day and every night of this especially blessed and holy month. May God keep our tongues moist with His remembrance and with humble supplications, asking from Him, so that He may grant our requests. Ameen!

It is easy to remember to pray for ourselves. The following is a suggestion of all the other people we can pray for:

Oh God, we pray that you forgive and bless all the people that are worshipping You in these special days, and also our parents and family, who are with us, who have passed away before us; all those who have helped us and benefitted us, all those who have asked anything of us, who have asked us to pray for them. We ask for Your healing, mercy, forgiveness and love as we think about those who have been affected by the pandemic this world is enduring, Guide humanity, bring light and peace to the hearts of all people. We pray for all of your creation, especially for the weak, the oppressed, the poor and indigent; for the orphans and the distressed, for the hungry and homeless, for the sad, the lonely and the ill. Oh God, help all these people to be raised out of their suffering; shower them with Your mercy for You are Arham-ur-Rahimeen – the Most Compassionate of those who show Compassion.

Ameen

Reminder 3: The Importance of Prayer

Prayer for Muslims is central to our lives. The importance and reason for prayer is much spoken about. Often times, perhaps this Ramadan, whilst we are in a time of crisis, in our own minds there has never been a greater need or time for reflection and understanding thereby, unlocking the power of our individual prayers.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتَوْا
الزَّكَاةَ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ
يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٢٧٧﴾

'Indeed, those who believe and do righteous deeds and establish prayer and give zakah will have their reward with their Lord, and there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.'

Quran (2:277)

أَتْلُ مَا أُوْحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ ۖ إِنَّ
الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ۗ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ
وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

'Recite, [O Muhammad], what has been revealed to you of the Book and establish prayer. Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing, and the remembrance of God is greater. And God knows well what you do.'

Quran (29:45)

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "The key to paradise is the ritual prayer."

(Abu Dawud)

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "Verily, between a person and idolatry and disbelief (shirk and kufr) is the abandonment of the prayer."

(Muslim)

In the words of Imam Ghazali:

"Ritual prayer (salah) has been made the chief pillar of the religion, the criterion for distinguishing between unbelief and Islam... I do not believe that ritual prayer enjoys all this special dignity by virtue of its external motions, unless they are linked with the purpose of intimate communion with God."

(From the Ihya, section on Salah, Elucidation for the Stipulation of Humbleness and Presence of the Heart (khushu'ah))

It could be argued that salah is Islam's greatest offering to humankind.

The Purifying Power of Prayer

Once the Prophet told his Companions: "The five set prayers may be compared to a stream of fresh water, flowing in front of your house, into which you plunge five times each day. Do you think that would leave any dirt on your body?"


They replied: "None at all!"

The Prophet (pbuh) said: "Indeed, the five Prayers remove sins, just as water removes dirt."

(Bukhari)



Discussion points:

- What is the importance of salah in Islam?
 - How is salah supposed to impact us?
 - How can our salah help us in moments of crisis like we are in at the moment?
- 

99 Names of God: Al Wadud



الْوَدُودُ
مَنْ يَحِبُّ
بِطَبْعِهِ



Al Wadud The Most Loving

Al Wadud is the One who loves and is the source of all loving, the One who is the most affectionate and Who is most deserving of all love and affection.

The Name stems from the root 'w-d-d', and words that stem from this root have the connotations of 'to love', 'to be affectionate' and 'to long for, desire or wish for.' The Arabic word 'wudd' conveys the meaning of love and friendship and is also an expression of love through the act of giving.

God is Al Wadud as He loves His servants as they love Him. Hubb is also used for 'love' in Arabic but connotes an inner feeling of love for someone whereas 'wudd' is an intense, consistent affection as it is expressed in actions and conduct. 'Wadud' points to intensity and continuity; God is Al Wadud and His love is intense, continuous and translates into blessings, favours, mercy and forgiveness.

In surah Al Maida God states "Oh you who believe! Whoever among you turns back from their religion, God will bring people whom He loves and who love Him, who are humble before the believers and mighty against the unbelievers." Quran (5:54)

God has named Himself Al Wadud, showing you that God not only loves you, but He shows you He loves you. We, as servants, love God due to our knowledge of His perfection and the perfection of His qualities, and His readiness to love.



KEY MESSAGES



- We should aim to connect well with the Quran and we can do this by learning the meaning of the verses we most recite.
- We should read the Quran without haste and in a measured way.
- Remember, it is all about quality not quantity.



- We should all try and remember God throughout the day. God is always ready to answer our prayers.
- When we pray, let us try and pray for others as well as ourselves, without exception,



- Prayer is important for many reasons. Firstly, it helps us strengthen our relationship to God.
- Prayer is also an opportunity that we should seize to not only gain a personal connection with God, but also to gain forgiveness and good deeds.
- The prayers we pray also remove our sins.

KEY MESSAGES



- God is Al Wadud, the most loving.
- God gives and deserves the most affection.
- God loves His creation so much so that He is willing to love them when they draw close.

18

DAY EIGHTEEN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of God, the Most Gracious,
the Most Merciful*



Reminder 1: Forgiveness

Reminder 2: Moral Code & Character

99 Names of God: Dhul Jalali Wal Ikram

Reminder 1: Forgiveness

Narrated Abu Huraira: I heard God's Apostle saying regarding Ramadan, "Whoever prayed at night in it (the month of Ramadan) out of sincere faith and hoping for a reward from God, then all their previous sins will be forgiven."

(Bukhari)

We often lose sight of how immeasurable the rewards for good deeds are in this wonderful month. To have your slate of ill-deeds wiped clean for just one night's prayer is difficult to comprehend, yet this is what the Prophet (pbuh) confirmed.

The condition for a night prayer being accepted in this way is that it must be offered with sincere faith and expectant of reward from God – so it must be a genuine communication with God. That will be difficult if you do not know the meaning of your prayer, so it would be wise to learn the meaning of at least the key parts of the prayer and then engage your mind on what you are reading as you pray.

A night prayer is classified as any extra prayer, called a *nafl* prayer, performed after the obligatory Isha prayer, but the closer to the Fajr, the better the prayer is.

May God accept our efforts in this holy month and gift us with His good pleasure and complete forgiveness. Ameen.

Reminder 2: Moral Code & Character

We all know that only God is the judge of our actions in this temporary life. So why is it that we are quick to judge each other? We often form an opinion and judge others by their appearance – it could be their dress, hairstyle, skin colour or just the way they speak. How fair is it for us to criticise someone else, when we are full of faults ourselves? Let us spend more time with the reflection we see in the mirror. Let us examine and evaluate, critique and analyse what we have become. Ask ourselves the question: does my character reflect the prophetic example? Ramadan is an amazing opportunity for change, a time to break the cycle of conscious or subconscious bias and cynicism. A time to search our souls and bring out the good that we are all capable of.

It is an expectation in general, that the ritual practices undertaken during the blessed month of Ramadan are meant to purify one's soul and heart from thoughts and deeds which are contrary to Islamic teachings. For example by removing material desires, one is able to focus more on adoration and service to God. We are expected to go beyond the physical ritual of fasting and attempt to decontaminate and purge ourselves of impure thoughts and motivations such as anger, backbiting, cursing, and greed. While the physical effort of fasting might make us feel weak in our bodies, we should remember that our souls are benefitting from our efforts.

It is narrated by Abdullah ibn Amr that the Messenger of God (pbuh) said: The best of you are those who possess the best of manners.

(Bukhari and Muslim)

This hadith reminds us of what truly matters when we compare ourselves with others. So if we want to compete, then let us compete to be the best in the eyes of our beloved Prophet (pbuh).

Aisha narrates that she heard the Messenger of God (pbuh) say: A Believer with good manners and a good moral disposition gets the same reward as the one who fasts (permanently) and spends the nights in prayer.

(Abu Dawud)

This is not to say that rituals are not important – they are crucial. This hadith demonstrates the great emphasis that has been placed on good manners and good morals. These obligatory rituals should lead to an improvement in our morals and manners.



99 Names of God: Dhul Jalaali Wal Ikram



Dhul Jalaali Wal Ikram Possessor of Glory & Honour

This name of God, is a beautiful Arabic phrase and begins with a pronoun followed by attributes of God;

Dhū (pronounced thoo)- Lord of, Possessor of

L- the

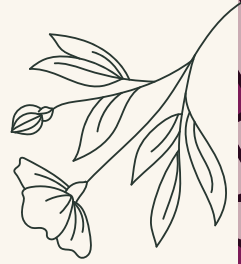
Jalaal- Majesty, Glory

Wa- and

l- the

Ikraam- Generosity and bounty

'Jalaali' originates from the root 'j-l-l' which connotes to be supremely great, majestic, sublime and independent. 'Ikram' stems from the root 'k-r-m' which connotes to be generous, honoured, highly esteemed, rare and bountiful. 'Al Jalil' and 'Al Karim' are also derived from the same roots. The words 'jalal' (glory) and 'ikram' (generosity) are verbal nouns whilst 'jalil' (glorious) and 'karim' (generous) are adjectives. The demonstrative pronoun Dhu literally means with, in, on, or, of, but in this phrase, it is translated as Lord of, owner of or possessor of.



God is the Lord of these two beautiful attributes. God is most honoured, and He is the source of all generosity, bounty and blessings. In surah Rahman, God says 'Blessed is the name of your Lord, Owner of Majesty and Honour.'



KEY MESSAGES



- In Ramadan, the reward for our good deeds are immeasurable.
- If we pray at night with sincerity and understanding trying to establish a proper connection with God, it is said that the forgiveness and mercy we will receive is unfathomable.



- Why should we judge one another if God is the ultimate judge?
- None of us are perfect so if someone makes a mistake we should not hold this against them. God is surely the best of judges.
- Whilst during Ramadan, we may feel physically weak, our soul is being strengthened and benefitting from these efforts.
- It is said that the best of us have the best manners which reminds us that a kind, compassionate character is what God loves best.



- God is the Possessor of Glory.
- God is generous and honoured.

19

DAY NINETEEN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of God, the Most Gracious,
the Most Merciful*



Surah Al Kawthar: Tafsir

Reminder 1: The Night Prayer

Reminder 2: Perfecting our Prayer

Reminder 3: Closeness to God

Surah Al Kawthar (The Abundance)

إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ

Indeed, We have granted you, [O Muhammad], al-Kawthar.

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَأَنْحَرْ

So pray to your Lord and sacrifice [to Him alone].

إِنَّ شَانِئَكَ هُوَ الْأُتْرُ

Indeed, your enemy is the one cut off.



Surah Al Kawthar: Tafsir

The full meaning of the word 'kawthar', cannot perhaps be expressed in one word in any language of the world. It literally means abundance, but in this context, it means an unbounded and limitless abundance of all things good such as spiritual benefits and blessings. This includes a river/fountain in heaven named 'Al-Kawthar' which God promised to the Prophet (pbuh).

The Quraysh were angry with Prophet (pbuh) because he worshipped and served only God and rejected their idolatry publicly. For this reason, he was deprived of the rank, esteem and honour that he enjoyed among his people before Prophethood and was now cut off from his community. Additionally, he was grieving the death of two sons, very soon one after the other.

The disbelievers rejoiced at this sad news. They thought that Muhammad (pbuh) had been completely ruined: he was cut off from the community and had become utterly helpless and powerless; his trade was ruined; his children who could perpetuate his name were dead. They thought he would only achieve disappointment and failure.

At this low point in his life, God sent down surah Al Kawthar to console the Prophet (pbuh). In the surah the Prophet (pbuh) is given good news, that he shall be rewarded with 'kawthar' and his opponents will be punished.

If we consider that after over 1400 years, the holy Prophet's blessed name continues to be exalted throughout the world and will continue to be so exalted till resurrection, the promise of God to his Messenger is fulfilled. SubhanAllah!

Reminder 1: Night Prayer

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قُمِ اللَّيْلَ إِلا قَلِيلاً ۚ

يَتَأْتِيَهَا الْمَرْمَلُ ۙ

1. O thou folded in garments!
2. Stand (to prayer) by night, but not all night,-

أَوْزِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلاً ۙ

نِصْفَهُ ۚ أَوْ أَنْقِصْ مِنْهُ قَلِيلاً ۙ

3. Half of it,- or a little less,
4. Or a little more; and recite the Quran in slow, measured rhythmic tones.

إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلاً ۙ

5. Soon shall We send down to thee a weighty Message

إِنَّ نَاشِئَةَ اللَّيْلِ هِيَ أَشَدُّ وَطْأًا وَأَقْوَمُ قِيلاً ۙ

6. Truly the rising by night is most potent for governing (the soul), and most suitable for (framing) the Word (of Prayer and Praise).



Surah Muzammil (chapter 73) is one of the earliest surahs to be revealed. The garments mentioned in the first verse refer to night clothes and so the first two verses were saying to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) that the time of whole nights of sleep was over. He is the Prophet of God and must devote himself to His worship in the night. He was then told to spend about half of the night standing in prayer, reading the Quran.

How was he to read it? With tartil – which means in slow, rhythmic tones. This unlocks the beauty of the Quran and stirs the heart. Umm Salamah, a wife of the Prophet (pbuh) explained that when he recited, he would pause after each verse (Ahmed, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi). This way he could reflect over the verse, be struck with awe of God, be filled with fear of His wrath but also with excitement and wonder, and longing for His company and paradise. The distractions of this trivial life would fade from the mind and the reality of the unseen world would come to the fore.

Half the night in prayer seems like an unreasonably long time. However, in verses five and six, God explained to the Prophet (pbuh) that he was no ordinary man and this passionate devotion to the Quran would help shape his priorities and nurture a very special relationship with his Creator.

There is something special about spending the night on something. Nowadays, junior doctors have to spend their nights caring for the sick and this shapes their personality so that they start to appreciate and instinctively feel that the healing of the sick is the main purpose in their life.

Although the night prayer, known as tahajjud, is no longer obligatory on everyone it is clearly a very special act of worship. 'Abdullah ibn as-Salam was a Jewish Rabbi who later became Muslim. He reports: "When the Prophet (pbuh) came to Madinah, the people gathered around him and I was one of them. I looked at his face and understood that it was not the face of a liar. The first words I heard him say were:

'O people, spread the salutations of peace, feed the people, keep the ties of family, and pray during the night while the others sleep and you will enter Paradise in peace.'

(Al-Hakim, Ibn Majah, and Tirmidhi)



Reminder 2: Perfecting our Prayer

We have already discussed how and why prayer is important. It is also important to understand and learn how we can perform our prayers in a better way, so that we can grow closer to God.

Outward Perfection in Prayer

Consider the following teachings of Prophet (pbuh):

“God continues turning to a slave in their prayer as long as they are not looking around; when they turn their face away, God turns His face away from them.”

(Abu Dawud)

“The worst type of thief is the one who steals from their prayer.” He (a companion) said, “O Messenger of God, how can a person steal from their prayer?” He said, “By not doing ruku’ and sujood properly.”

(Ahmad)

“He (pbuh) used to make his rukoo’, his standing after rukoo’, his sujood and his sitting in between sajdahs, nearly equal in length.”

(Bukhari and Muslim)

“When you rise, hold your spine upright and raise your head, until your bones return to their joints.”

(Bukhari)

“When you prostrate, place your face and hands firmly, until all your bones are relaxed in their proper places.”

(Ibn Khuzaimah)

"The Prophet prohibited us from three things: pecking like a rooster (making the prostration very quickly), sitting like a dog, and not turning one's whole head like a fox."

(Ahmad)

Inner Perfection in Prayer

The Prophet (pbuh) said: "When performing the prayer, one is conversing intimately with one's Lord."

(Bukhari, Muslim)

And, "Many of those who pray derive nothing from their prayers except weariness and strain."

(Nasa'i)

God's Messenger (pbuh) said: "Though they perform the whole prayer, a person may be credited with no more than one sixth or one tenth of it. A person gets credit for only that part of their prayer of which they are conscious."

(Abu Dawud)

According to Mu'adh bin Jabal: "A person gets no credit for a prayer in which they deliberately notice those on their left and right."

The beautiful sajdah

The Messenger of God said, "Whenever a Muslim prostrates before God for His sake, God raises them one degree by it, and absolves them of one evil deed."

(Muslim, Ibn Majah)

The Messenger of God said, "A creature does not draw near to God by anything more excellent than by prostration in private."

(Ibn al Mubarak, mursal)

It is related that a man said to the Messenger of God, "Supplicate to God that He may make me one of those who enjoy your intercession, and that He may grant me your companionship in paradise." He replied, "Then help me with frequent prostrations."

(Muslim)

It is said, "The nearest a creature is to God is when they are prostrating, and that is the meaning of the saying of God: 'And prostrate thyself and draw near!'"

Quran (96:19).

God said, "Their foreheads show the mark of prostrations"

Quran (48:29)

It is said, "It is the light of humbleness, for it shines from within to the surface," and that is the soundest meaning. It is also said "It is the brightness that will be on their faces on Resurrection Day from the trace of the ablution."

Yusuf b. Asbat used to say, "O company of young men, make use of your health before illness comes, for there is no one I envy more except a man who performs completely his bowing and his prostration, since some hindrance has come between me and that."

It is related that 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz did not like to prostrate except on bare earth.

Reminder 3: Closeness to God

Closeness to God in Islam is something that is sought after by all members of our faith, and all the practices we observe as Muslims are in pursuit of closeness to God. Seeing as closeness cannot be quantified, unlike the number of times we pray a day or the amount of zakat we give, it is really a question of personal exploration and a seemingly never-ending journey in the pursuit of knowledge to strive for this desirable closeness.

Closeness with our Creator is not a divine right granted only to our prophets. Even though we are not in 'direct communication' in the same sense as our prophets, closeness to God can be achieved through our actions, such as through dhikr and prayer. God states in the Holy Quran: 'Call on Me. I will answer your prayer' (40:60). This places us in communication with God, not in the same way as the prophets perhaps, but in a simple, easy way, that perhaps we take for granted.

The idea of closeness to God is two-fold in Islam. On the one hand, God is distant to us in terms of the nature of His being, which cannot be quantified or understood by us and is not meant to be understood by us. The Islamic scholar Nursi describes our image of God as 'An absolute and all-encompassing entity who has no limits or terms, and therefore cannot be shaped or formed, and cannot be determined in such a way that its essential nature can be comprehended'. The nature of God is not relatable or familiar to us in any way. The mutual understanding and emotions we seek to share with other people in our real lives are not something we can possibly share with our Creator, as we do not share in His existence.

On the other hand, we are closer to God than we are to anything else on this planet. As He is our Creator we have no independence from Him. Our bond with God is closer than any other relationship we can experience in our lives. God is reflected in everything in our universe and He is always present, whether we choose to acknowledge His constant presence or not. Our job as Muslims is to seek to realise this.

Closeness to God is something people strive for their entire lives, however starting out your journey to this closeness is neither daunting nor difficult. God recognises our need to feel a closeness to Him, which is why we have been given tools so we can be (such as prayer, dua and fasting). It is through knowledge of our religion and strength in our faith that we can achieve closeness to God but also through increasing our bond with God's creation. Kindness to others, to ourselves and seeking to help others in times of need are exactly what can bring you closer to God and should be seen as much a part of our religious obligation as prayer etc. Perhaps the reason we may not feel close to God is because we take for granted the amount of things we do in our lives in aid of this closeness. As the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) reminded us: 'Even a smile is charity'. Perhaps simply reminding ourselves of the weight of our actions and the meaning behind them will aid us in our journey to being close to God.

Family Discussion Points

What everyday things can we do that bring us closer to God?

Is being able to relate to God important when it comes to being close to Him?

KEY MESSAGES



- Surah Muzamil is one of the earliest surahs.
- The surah explains how the Prophet (pbuh) should devote part of the night to worshipping God.
- He was to read verses slowly and in measured ways with understanding.
- Although we do not have the same obligations as the Prophet (pbuh) did, we may want to spend a portion of the night praying or reflecting.



- We should truly understand the importance of prayer. It is said to be important that we take time over prayer.
- This means that we should not hasten our ruku and sajud. It actually will negatively impact us as after all, prayer is for our benefit, not God's.
- We should prostrate properly and turn properly.
- We should try to achieve an inner state of peace and concentration too. This means not looking around at other people but instead, conversing with God.



- Closeness with God is so important in Islam. We can achieve this closeness through dhikr and prayer.
- In prayer, we can communicate with God, drawing a personal connection with Him.
- Although God is transcendent and above anything we can ever think of, we have a bond with God due to Him being our Creator.
- God recognises that we long to be close to Him, so has blessed us with tools to reach Him, such as dua and kindness to others.

20

DAY TWENTY

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of God, the Most Gracious,
the Most Merciful*



Surah Al Qadr: Tafsir

Reminder 1: I'tikaf

Reminder 2: Power of Dua

99 Names of God: Al Akhir

Surah Al Qadr

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ

Indeed, We sent the Quran down during the Night of Decree.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ

And what can make you know what is the Night of Decree?

لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ

The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months.

تَنْزَلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ

The angels and the Spirit descend therein by permission of their Lord for every matter.

سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّىٰ مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ

Peace it is until the emergence of dawn.



Surah Al Qadr: Tafsir

Surah Al Qadr is an informative surah on the Night of Glory (Laylat ul-Qadr). Its positioning in the Quran, directly after surah Al Alaq, is no coincidence. Surah Al Alaq details how the revelation began, while surah Al Qadr explains when the revelation came. The first verse emphasises that the Quran was sent down from the heavens by God Himself, rather than being the product of any human being.

The rhetorical question in the second verse suggests that the Night of Glory is something so great that it is not easily comprehensible by humanity, so the next three verses help by putting some of its features into human terms. The first comparison it gives is that to do good on the Night of Glory is better than to do so for a thousand months. This corresponds to over 83 years, or around the average life expectancy in most developed countries today. The subtlety of stating that it is better than an entire human lifetime, rather than just equal to it suggests that someone could do good for their entire life and it would still not be equal to this single night's work, emphasising its importance.

The surah goes on to mention the presence of many angels on earth for the duration of the Night of Glory, who pray continuously for the believers and send them their salaam, bringing them yet more peace and blessings. This leads to God concluding by emphasising the peace and safety (from all evil) of the Night of Glory.

Interestingly, God does not specify the exact night that the Night of Glory falls on, aside from it being one of the last ten nights of Ramadan. It could be argued that God, in His infinite wisdom, therefore does not wish for people to only worship Him and do good on this night alone, but instead to maintain their good practices, as well as their worship and connection with Him, in their everyday lives. God is, however, merciful in narrowing the occurrence of the Night of Glory down to this ten-day window to make it easier for us to attain such incalculable rewards.

A lesson which can be taken from this surah is that we should not squander opportunities which come our way: we could gain far more from them than perhaps we would assume on face value. In addition, it is important to take such opportunities when they come because we never know when or if they may come again. To use the example of the present situation, many of us have more free time at the moment than perhaps we were expecting. We should be proactive and use this time wisely: whilst we should be kind and patient with ourselves, this is also an opportunity to learn about who we are as individuals. We could also try and learn something new, be it a skill, language or something else? Why not increase your knowledge in a particular subject area you are interested in? There are many things we can do and learn about from the comfort of our own homes, which we may have time for now but will not necessarily have time for in the future. We must not waste such opportunities.

During this life, God will judge us based on how well we make use of the tools and resources available to us, to better ourselves and the world around us. As a result, it could be argued that to make use of this opportunity (and others) in such ways would be considered by God as a form of worship, so He will therefore reward us for doing so.



Reminder 1: Itikaf

The beginning of the last ten days heralds a new and intensified phase of the month of mercy. This is a time of growing excitement as the nation of Muhammad (pbuh) look forward to a flowering of their faith, their companionship with the Quran, their relationship with their Lord and their admission into paradise.

It is the time for increasing our gratitude to God.. After the Prophet was informed of the Night of Destiny being in the last ten days, he started performing seclusion (Itikaf) in the mosque during this period in the hope of worshipping during that night and many of his companions followed him.

In these days where we are confined to our houses unable to go into Itikaf in the mosque, we should still consider how we might benefit and please God. Long readings of the Quran, sacrificing sleep for nights praying and spending generously in charity will help us.

Narrated Aisha: With the start of the last ten days of Ramadan, the Prophet used to tighten his waist belt and used to pray all night, and used to keep his family awake for the prayers.

(Bukhari)



Worshipping for the few hours of Laylat Al Qadr will be counted as a whole lifetime of worship. So let us make sure that on each night we spend some of our money in charity, read some Quran, perform some extra salah and make special duas to God. On this night our sins can be wiped clean away:

Aisha said: "I asked the Messenger of God: 'O Messenger of God, if I were to know which was the Night of Destiny, what should I say during it?'"

He said: 'Say: O God, surely You are the eraser of sins and You love to erase sins, so erase my sins for me.'

(Tirmidhi)



Reminder 2: Power of Dua

Making dua (supplication or personal prayer) is essential to our everyday worship. This action should be intensified and multiplied during the blessed month of Ramadan. Whatever the situation is, that we find ourselves in, we should speak with God the Almighty. We live in a world where we consider it a basic human right to be able to contact our loved ones. It would be horrible for us to imagine a world where we lose that communication, and the current pandemic increases our empathy and compassion for those who are unable to be with their loved ones. Yet we allow our contact with our Lord and Creator to vanish from our lives. We must start a conversation with God the Almighty. Let us make our personal duas – in our own words, sharing every worry and concern, and expressing our thanks for every blessing that He has given us. This simple act, that needs no special knowledge, will connect us with the One who can hear our every breath, and has the power to soothe our every worry.

Salman al-Farsi narrates that he heard the Messenger of God (pbuh) say: Indeed your Lord is extremely Generous and Shy. If His servant raises his hands to Him (in supplication), He becomes shy to return them empty.

(Tirmidhi)

We often forget how humbling and gratifying the experience of making dua truly is. How many times has someone asked us to pray for them and we answered InshaAllah (God willing), yet never actually made any dua for them?



*Abu Darda narrated that the Messenger of God (pbuh) said:
The supplication of a Muslim for his brother in his absence
will certainly be answered. Every time he makes a
supplication for good for his brother, the angel appointed for
this particular task says: Ameen! May it be for you too.*

(Muslim)



The beneficiary of our dua is not only the person we are making dua for, it is actually us as well! What could be more liberating and rewarding than angels making dua for us? Let us turn to God during these blessed nights of Ramadan, and ask Him for our family members and loved ones, for every individual who has ever asked us to pray for them, and even those who didn't ask but are in need. Just imagine the number of times the angel makes dua for us in return! Final word – please remember us all in your duas!

99 Names of God: Al Akhir



الْآخِرُ
مَنْ جَاءَ بَعْدَ



Al Akhir *The Last*

Al Akhir stems from the root 'a-kh-r' which has the classical connotations of 'being the latter', to be the 'last, final and ultimate' or to 'postpone.' The name al-Mu'akhkhir (The Delayer) also comes from the same root.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) addressing God in supplication said 'You are the First, so nothing precedes You. You are the Last so nothing comes after You. You are the manifest, so nothing comes above you. You are hidden so nothing comes below You. Fulfil our debts for us and enrich us so we not be poor.'

Al Akhir thus means The One who remains after all of creation has passed away, The One who is the conclusion and behind all of creation. The One beyond whom is nothing. God has no beginning and He abides after all things without ever coming to an end. Even the Sun will 'run its course to a point determined' (Quran 36:38). All stars are born, and they will die. God cannot be understood according to the terms of material existence. He is not bound by the laws of physics which are themselves part of the nature of what He created.

KEY MESSAGES



- This is an informative surah about the Night of Glory and explains when the revelation came.
- It suggests that this night is not easily understood by mankind, so thus tries to illuminate us through descriptions about it.
- Many angels will be present on earth during this night bringing believers even more peace.
- We should take advantage of these opportunities given to us by God to better ourselves and our character.



- The Night of Qadr could be any of the nights in the last ten days.
- We should anticipate bettering our relationship with God as it is said that during this time, God has overflowing generosity for all requests.



- God is the Ultimate or the Last.
- God is seen to be the first as well as the last and nothing comes above Him.
- God will remain whilst all of creation has passed away.



- Although duas are essential to everyday worship, we should practice making duas even more in Ramadan.
- Whatever the situation, let us speak with God. Our relationship with God is even more important than our relationship with family and friends yet we often forget this and let our prayers or duas slip.
- Making dua makes us humble.

21

DAY TWENTY ONE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of God, the Most Gracious,
the Most Merciful*



Reminder 1: Laylat ul Qadr

Reminder 2: Dealing with Hardship

99 Names of God: Al Mughni

Reminder 1: Laylat ul Qadr

Laylat al Qadr can be translated as the Night of Destiny, in that the Prophet taught that the destiny of everything on earth is revealed to the angels that night, to enact over the coming year, or the Night of Sanctity because Qadr also means something revered, magnificent, sanctified, or the Night of Increase because it is the night when the rewards for good deeds are multiplied beyond imagination.

That one night is better than a thousand months because the Quran was revealed on that night and all the angels including Angel Jibrail descend on that night.

1000 months is 83 years – which is basically one lifetime, although even a saint could not worship continuously for 83 years! Imagine catching worship during a night in which that worship will be equivalent to having worshipped continuously for an entire lifetime!

Nobody knows which night of Ramadan Laylat Al Qadr is. However, we know it is in the last ten days and probably one of the odd ones.

May God give us the opportunity to worship Him in the Night of Power, and be granted the equivalent of a lifetime of worship, and the forgiveness of God. Ameen.

Reminder 2: Dealing with hardship

We all face difficulties. The Quran explains that 'We have created man into toil.' (90:4)

We are living in a very uncertain time and the majority of us are adapting to a new, unusual lifestyle. There are some of us who may be struggling financially, some of us may be struggling with health, some of us will have lost people know and love, some of us may be alone in lockdown, and some of us may be struggling with stress and anxiety. These hardships may appear in different forms and different extents to different individuals yet God states 'He has created death and life, that he may test which of you is best in deed. And He is the All-Mighty, the Oft Forgiving.'(67:2) So, in the Quran we are told life will test us, but we are also ensured that if we are patient in the face of adversity we shall be rewarded and that 'Verily after hardship will come ease.' (94:5/6)

The best of examples; the Messenger of God faced many difficulties in his life. He grew up orphaned, and in later life lived in Makkah, amongst the Quraysh (devout polytheists,) who tormented, humiliated him and tried to break his spirit after his revelation. They associated Muhammad's (pbuh) name with being a poet, a priest, a liar or a madman to prevent new people from believing him, and many attempts to kill his companions were successful.

Abu Lahab, the Prophet's (pbuh) own uncle, and his wife Um Jameel, used to gather garbage and thorns and spread them in the Prophet's way. The Muslims were boycotted by the Quraysh; everyone was banned from doing business with the Muslims, talking to them or giving them food.

Following the Boycott came the 'Year of Sorrow,' the year in which the Prophet not only lost his wife Khadijah (ra), his greatest support and confidant, but also his uncle Abu Talib, leaving the Prophet vulnerable due to the loss of clan protection. The Prophet thus ventured to a neighbouring city Ta'if to ask for support and to spread his message to the Chiefs there, however they set boys upon him, to throw stones and abuse Muhammad (pbuh). He bled profusely but told Angel Jibrail not to destroy the city, insisting that some of their descendants will believe one day.

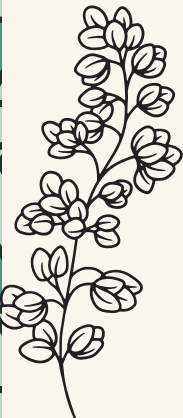
These are few out of hundreds of examples of how the Prophet (pbuh) faced hardship, yet no matter how great the opposition he always reacted to his injustices calmly, with strength and gentleness. He always forgave; years later during the conquest of Makkah, he marched back into his home city and forbade any residents from being harmed, despite the extreme pain and grief he had endured from these very people years before.

Whenever tests befall you; It is hard not to see tests as punishment, questioning if God is there for you and why He has challenged you so. God tests those He loves, as He has tested each of the prophets before us and as He tested Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). God does not charge a soul 'except that which is within its capacity' (2:286) and as the Prophet (pbuh) stated, 'I swear by Him who has sent me with the Truth, God is more affectionate to His servants than a mother to her young.'

God states in the Quran:

'You shall most certainly be tried in your possessions and in your persons; and you shall hear much hurtful abuse from those who were given revelations before you and from those who set up partners with God. But if you persevere and continue to fear God -that is indeed a matter requiring strong resolve.'

(Quran 3:186.)



99 Names of God: Al Mughni



المُغْنِي



Al Mughni The Enricher

Al Mughni comes from the root 'gh-n-y' which connotes being 'free from wants or needs', being 'self-sufficient', 'content' and 'wealthy.' Ghani from the same root denotes the one whose essential nature is independence, self-sufficiency and supreme wealth. Mughni denotes specific deeds done by the One in bestowing wealth. Al Mughni thus is the One who gives wealth abundantly and provides all that is needed, fulfilling all needs. God is the One who enriches all of creation and creates all appearances of independence, and the One who bestows satisfaction and contentment.

God states in the Quran 'and if you fear poverty, God will enrich you out of His Grace if He pleases; surely God is Knowing, Wise' (9:28)

KEY MESSAGES



- The Night of Destiny is said to be one where the destiny of all on earth is revealed to the angels.
- It is also the night where good deeds are multiplied beyond what we can imagine.
- Worship on this night is equivalent of worshipping for an entire lifetime!



- We are all dealing with hardship. This varies from person to person however it is said in the Quran that if we remain patient, we shall be rewarded in the long run.
- The Prophet (pbuh) had many struggles throughout his life such as the Quraysh humiliating him, people throwing stones and abusing him, the Muslims being boycotted and the loss of many people dear to him.
- However, no matter how hard his life became, he responded with compassion and patience and most importantly, always forgave. Let us try and follow this example.



- God is the Enricher.
- God is the one who bestows blessings. If we gain something we should always thank God as it is always due to God and not us.
- God enriches all His creation with satisfaction and happiness. May we be of those who continue to increase in our gratitude for all that we have, for all that we remain protected from and for all the blessings God has bestowed upon each of us across the world. Ameen.

