



Study Circle

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

WEEK 2



ISLAMIC SOCIETY OF BRITAIN
PRESENTS

*A 30-day study
circle programme*

This pack consists of:

- A series of reminders
- Tafsirs on short surahs of the Quran
 - Attributes of God
- Short stories of the prophets (peace be upon them)

Version 1.1

How to use this pack

- This resource has been created in order to allow families to come together during Ramadan and hold study circles.
- 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 it. 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 their circles with wider family or friends through the use of online interfaces. This will bring together families regularly in worship and the remembrance of God.
- This pack contains the content for Week 2. To obtain the next pack please visit isb.org.uk. For your ease, each day is divided into three sections. These include 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.



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

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ymuk.net

info@isb.org.uk

0300 365 10 9 8



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

Glossary

Hadith

Refers to reports of what Prophet Muhammad said and did (literally: statements or news)

Islam

Has two meanings intertwined: 'peace' and to 'give one's will to God'

Pbuh

Peace be upon him. When used for Muhammad, it means 'peace and blessings 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

The act of 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)

Swa Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala, meaning 'may He be praised and exalted'

Tafsir Commentary of the Quran

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

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

Day 8

Tafsir: Surah Al Fatiha

Reminder 1: The Quran

Reminder 2: Ramadan as a mercy from God

Surah Fatiha (The Opening)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

[All] praise is [due] to God, Lord of the worlds,

الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful,

مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَ إِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

It is You we worship and You we ask for help.

إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

Guide us to the straight path -

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ شَمِ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَ لَا الضَّالِّينَ

The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray.

Surah Al-Fatiha Tafsir

Al-Fatiha is a prayer from the believer and the Quran is the answer from our Master. The servant prays to God, in order to show him guidance, the Master places the whole of the Quran before him in answer to his prayer, as if to say, 'This is the guidance you begged from me'.

This surah is named 'Al-Fatiha' because of its subject matter. It is the opening and one of the very earliest revelations to the Prophet. It was the first complete surah to be revealed and has been placed at the very beginning of the book to teach us a lesson: if you sincerely want to benefit from the Quran, offer this prayer to the Lord of the Universe. Offer this prayer with a strong desire in your heart to seek guidance from the Lord of the Universe, who alone can grant it.

'Shall I not teach you the greatest surah in the Quran?', said the Prophet (pbuh).' [He then recited Surah Al-Fatiha]

Reported by Abu Said al-Mu'alla (Bukhari).

Islamic culture requires a person to commence everything beginning with the name of God. If this is done consciously and sincerely, it is said to have three benefits:

- It will keep you away from evil, because the very name of God will compel you to consider whether you are justified in associating God's name with a wrong deed or an improper intention.
- The very mention of the name of God will help to put in you the right state of mind and direct you to the right path.
- You will receive God's blessing and will be protected from evil, for God turns to you when you turn to God.

Reminder: The Quran

The Quran is the scripture at the heart of the Islamic faith – its name literally means ‘the Recitation’. Although the authentic Quran is in the Arabic language, translations are widely available.

Muslims also regard earlier scriptures such as the Torah and Gospels as inspired by God, but believe the Quran is God’s final testament and guidance. The Quran centres on the subject of humanity and its condition: its relationship with God, its virtues, its weaknesses, its fate and its responsibilities. It is not, as many assume, simply composed of pages of rigid rules.

The life of Muhammad is an inseparable part of the Quran’s story. He would receive ‘speech’ from God brought to him by the Angel Gabriel, and would recite it aloud. These recitations arrived piecemeal over a period of 23 years, and make up the contents of the Quran, which was committed to memory by a large number of Muhammad’s followers. Muslims thus view the Quran as ‘the word of God’ and ascribe tremendous importance and respect to it. Its recitation has a deeply spiritual impact and even those who do not understand its linguistic meaning and beauty cherish its rhythm and flow.

Furthermore, it is seen as the most important basis of how people should live, though in order to be fully understood, the text of the Quran needs to be read alongside the context of its time.

Although it is a book, it is unconventional in its format. There is no beginning, middle or concluding end, and the contents are not sequenced in the time order of their delivery. The Quran gives its reader the freedom to choose or decline its messages, and by doing so, teaches a world view of religious freedom and tolerance

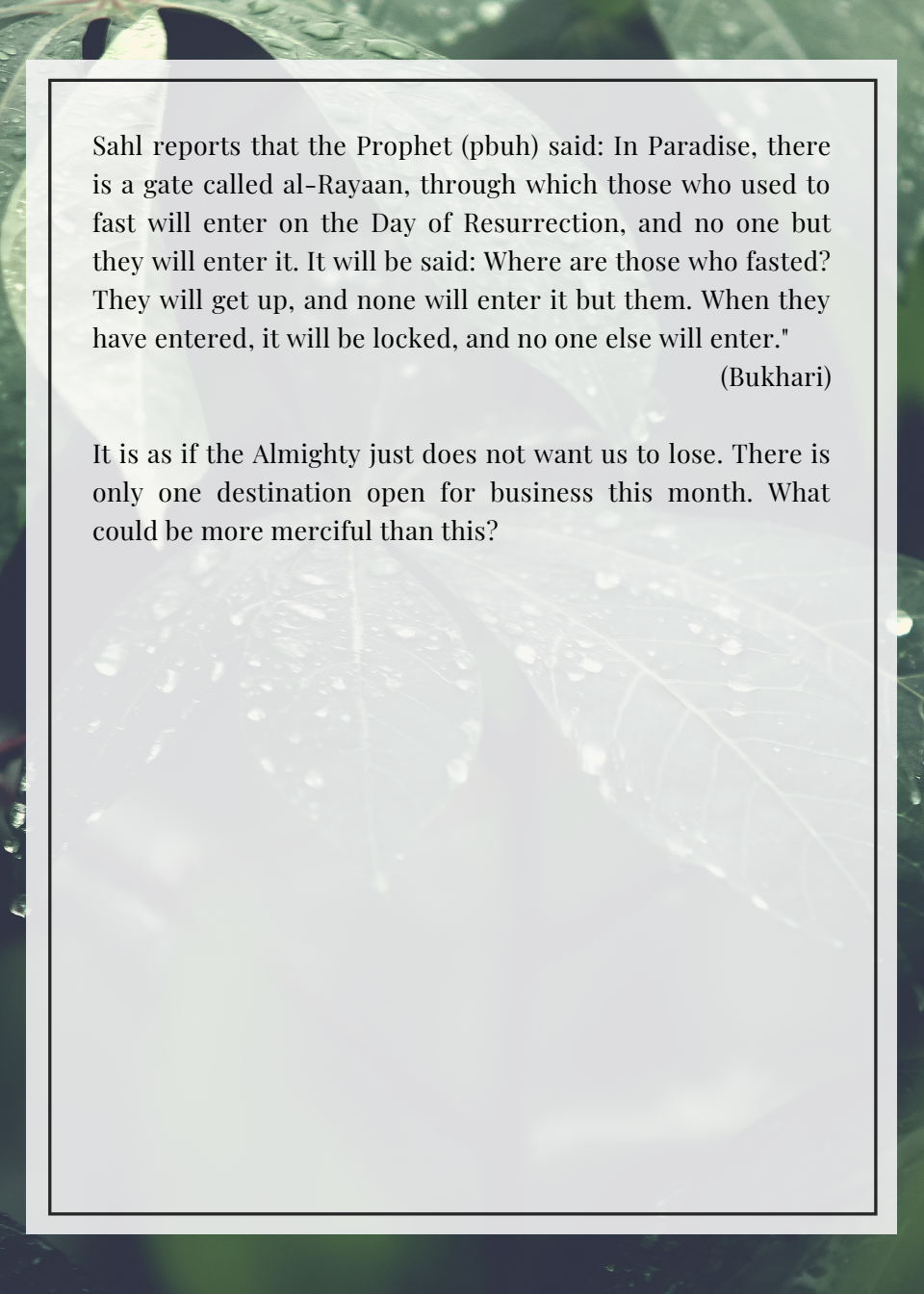
Ramadan as a mercy from God

We often think of fasting as being difficult; we refrain from eating or drinking for long hours. In these spring months, we often feel hungry or thirsty and have to control our desires (for water especially). So what is so special about this month? A month that we are encouraged to prepare for during the preceding two months: Rajab and Shaban. Why is this month known as the ‘month of mercy’?

Abu Huraira narrates that the Messenger of God (pbuh) said: ‘When the month of Ramadan begins, the gates of Heaven are opened, and the gates of Hellfire are closed, and the devils are chained.’ (Bukhari)

God is encouraging us by giving us of his boundless gifts. We have been given the opportunity to benefit during this month, as our greatest enemy (Shaytan) has been removed through the love and mercy of God. But the gift gets bigger: not only have our worst enemies been blocked, but the gates that lead to that one place we all fear, the gates to Hell, have all been closed. Just reading this one sentence should bring us indescribable joy and happiness. This means that God surely wants us to succeed during this month. How truly blessed is this month that even before it has begun, the mercy of God has already been conveyed to us.

But there is even more: that one destination that we all crave for and dream of, the place we pray we will one day enter, through the mercy of God, the gates of Heaven, have been flung open.



Sahl reports that the Prophet (pbuh) said: In Paradise, there is a gate called al-Rayaan, through which those who used to fast will enter on the Day of Resurrection, and no one but they will enter it. It will be said: Where are those who fasted? They will get up, and none will enter it but them. When they have entered, it will be locked, and no one else will enter."

(Bukhari)

It is as if the Almighty just does not want us to lose. There is only one destination open for business this month. What could be more merciful than this?

KEY MESSAGES

- The month of Ramadan in particular is the month where Muslims are encouraged to be charitable and aid those around them. This in turn will benefit them due to God's gifts of forgiveness and mercy for a believer who does good.
- In Ramadan, good deeds that one does optionally could receive as much reward from God as an obligatory good deed performed in other months.
- Ramadan is a month whereby all Muslims should try to better their own relationship with God by fasting during the day and also improving one's character and treatment towards themselves and others.
- Throughout the month of Ramadan, God grants us endless opportunities to seek forgiveness. This is because during this sacred month, Hellfire is closed as a gift from God.
- God wants us to succeed by decreasing temptations that may distract us throughout the day.
- God's kindness is also extended to the Day of Resurrection where all those who fast will be led through a gate into Paradise.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

Day 9

Tafsir: Surah Naas

99 Names of God: The Bestower of Security

Reminder: Forgiveness in Ramadan

Surah An-Naas (Mankind)

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ

Say: "I seek refuge with the sustainer of mankind"

مَلِكِ النَّاسِ

the sovereign of mankind,

إِلَهِ النَّاسِ

the God of mankind,

مِنْ شَرِّ الْوَسْوَاسِ الْخَنَّاسِ

from the evil of the whispering, elusive tempter

الَّذِي يُوَسْوِسُ فِي صُدُورِ النَّاسِ

who whispers in the hearts of mankind

مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ

from all [temptation to evil by] invisible forces as well as mankind."

Surah An-Naas Tafsir

The two last surahs of the Quran together are known as the Mu'awwidhatayn (the two surahs in which refuge with God has been sought) as they are so deeply related and their contents are similar.

The Prophet (pbuh) arranged the present order of the Quran by the command of God. According to this order, the Quran opens with surah Al-Fatiha and ends with the Mu'awwidhatayn. The journey from the first surah to the last can be summarised as follows:

- In the beginning, after praising and glorifying God, humankind pleads, 'You alone do I worship and to You alone I turn for help, guide me to the straight way'.
- In answer, God has presented the whole Quran to show us the straight way.
- The Quran concludes with the statement: 'I seek refuge only with you for protection from every evil'.

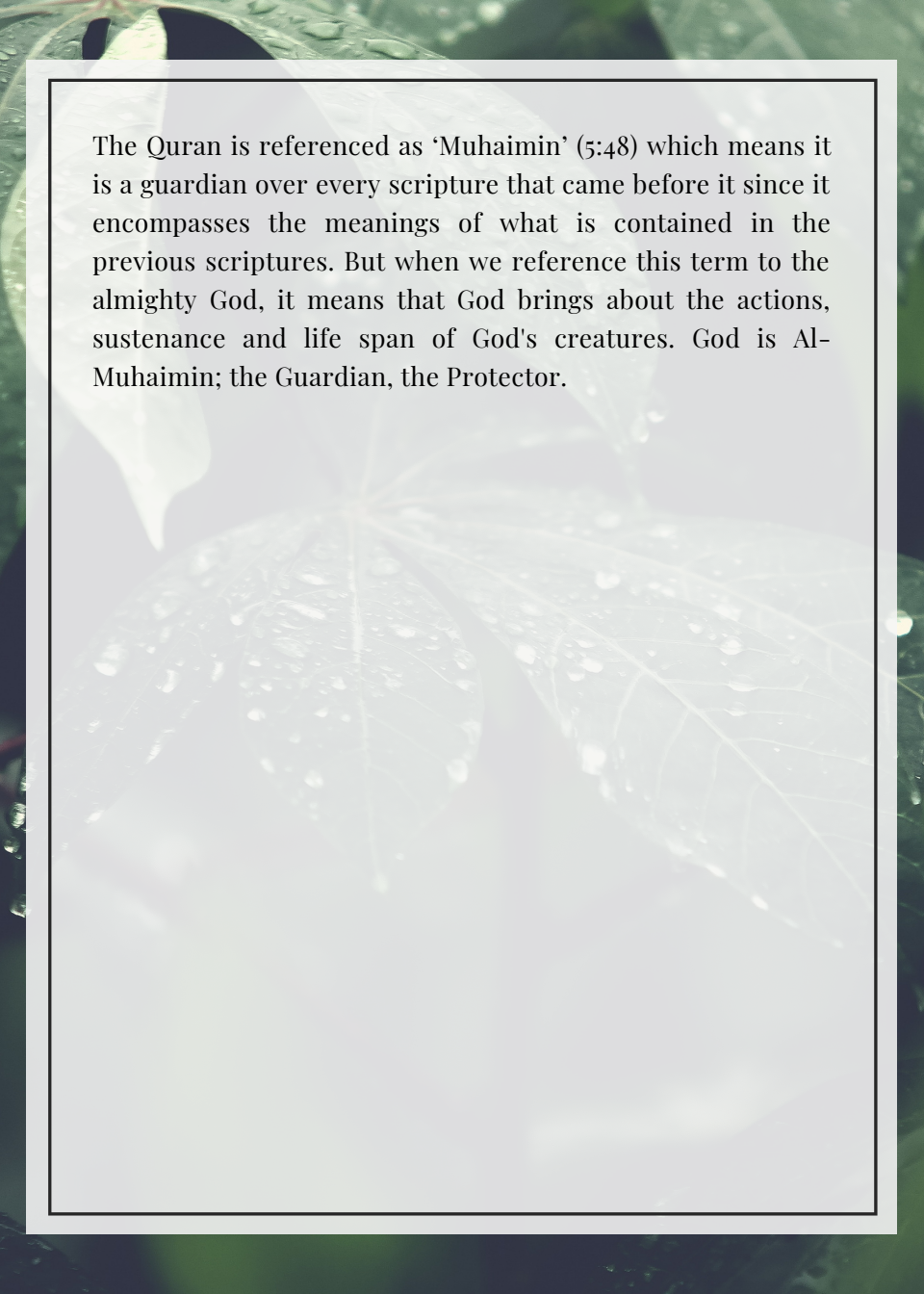
99 Names of God: The Bestower of Security

المُهَيِّمِ

Al Muhaimin The Bestower of Security

Through God's knowledge, control and protection, God is the guardian over all and is ever-watchful. God is the Protector—the One whose wings of love extend to protect creation, as a hen would protect her chicks. There are different meanings of 'Al Muhaimin', but all connote God being the observer and the witness, for God knows what the heart conceals. The name necessitates continuity and endurance and when we say that God is 'Al-Muhaimin,' it means that God knows all. God's divine knowledge is infinite; He is the one from whom nothing can be hidden.

The name comes from the Arabic root 'h-y-m-n' which has a classical Arabic connotation of watching over, guarding and 'being a witness to'.

The background of the page features a close-up photograph of green leaves. Several large, clear water droplets are scattered across the leaf surfaces, particularly on a large leaf in the lower half of the image. The lighting is soft, creating a natural and serene atmosphere.

The Quran is referenced as 'Muhaimin' (5:48) which means it is a guardian over every scripture that came before it since it encompasses the meanings of what is contained in the previous scriptures. But when we reference this term to the almighty God, it means that God brings about the actions, sustenance and life span of God's creatures. God is Al-Muhaimin; the Guardian, the Protector.

Reminder: Forgiveness in Ramadan

Abu Huraira related that the Prophet (pbuh) said: 'Whoever fasts during Ramadan with faith and seeking his reward from God will have their past sins forgiven. Whoever prays during the nights in Ramadan with faith and seeks their reward from God will have their past sins forgiven. And those who pass Laylat al-Qadr in prayer with faith and seeking their reward from God will have his past sins forgiven'.

(Bukhari, Muslim)

It is easy to forget just how special the month of Ramadan is. If we put all our effort into devoting ourselves to God in this month, fasting sincerely in the day and praying in the night, worshipping during Laylat al-Qadr, and improving our relationship with ourselves and others, we would be hopeful for God's love and mercy and pray we emerge from this month as pure as a new-born baby! Few things could be more precious than that.

KEY MESSAGES

- Due to God's mercy, whoever fasts in Ramadan with faith is said to be forgiven for all past sins.
- God's compassion is also extended to those who pray during the nights of Ramadan, especially those who spend Laylat al-Qadr in sincere prayer.
- Thus, Ramadan should be seen as a month of opportunity to better ourselves through devotion to God.
- God is the Protector.
- Through God's knowledge of all, God protects his creation as a mother would protect her children.
- God is omniscient, and knows what we keep secret in our hearts and minds, as well as what we say and do.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

Day 10

Reminder 1: Good character

99 Names of God: King of All Beings

Reminder 2: Beauty in the Quran

Reminder: Good Character

Good character and behaviour are an integral part of most faiths, and Islam is no different. Their great importance is emphasised by Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) words: 'I have only been sent to perfect good manners', and: 'The best amongst you are the best in character' (Muhammad).

The Prophet's examples, and the messages in the Holy Quran, are the loom from which the moral fibres of our community are tightly woven; no one is to be forgotten – from simple greetings to the obligations of visiting the sick.

If we scratch the surface of Islamic history, we find many examples that demonstrate the etiquettes that a Muslim should uphold. One, which parallels the Christian belief of 'loving thy neighbour', is the declaration that 'he is not a believer, he who eats to his fill, whilst his neighbour besides him goes hungry', or the statement that 'none of us truly believe until we love for our brother/sister what he loves for himself' (Muhammad).

99 Names of God: The King of all Beings

المَلِكُ

Al Malik

King of all Beings

Al-Malik is the one who is king of all beings. The one who is the owner and ruler of this world. Al-Malik has supreme authority and is relied upon by everyone. Al-Malik rules over all that exists.

The realisation that the all-encompassing universe has a unique owner makes believers naturally turn to God, who has control over everything and everyone.

The Quran also mentions ‘Al-Malik’ and ‘Al-Maleek’, which share the same root and have similar and complementary meanings. They come from the Arabic root ‘m-l-k’ which has the classical Arabic connotations of:

- Possessing and owning exclusively
- To exercise authority to command
- To have power over, command and reign
- To have dominion over, to have ruling power
- To have kingship

The root appears over 200 times in the Quran in ten derived forms, with examples being 'malakat' - to possess, and 'mulk' - dominion.

Traditionally, the beautiful names of God are divided into 'Al-Rabb', which includes the divine characteristics such as the Creator, the Giver and the Knower; and 'Al-Malik' including characteristics such as the Commander, the Wise and the Just. Al-Malik falls under the second category and expresses God's power over His creation. There is neither true power nor absolute authority to anyone except God. God is your Malik and you are part of His kingdom. He knows what is to come and what is good for you. Refrain from arrogance, and keep reminding yourself that you are an 'Abd', a slave of God, a servant of Al Malik, for he is the only true, perfect, infinite King of all beings.

Reminder: The Beauty of the Quran

Had We sent down this Quran on a mountain, verily, you would have seen it humble itself and split apart in awe of God. Such are the parables which We offer to humanity so that they may reflect.

(Quran, Surah Al Hashr, 59:21)

It is too easy to ignore the gravity of the book which we allow to gather dust on our shelves. When it sits on the shelf, it looks pretty much like any other book. Open it up, however, and your eyes and your mind are emblazoned with the very words of the Creator of the heavens and earth, the Eternal Sustainer of the Universe!

These are no ordinary words. These words can crumble a mountain. These words shook the earth and created a new world order. These words changed the lives of a swathe of humanity. They bring a fiery justice, a stark warning, and on the same page a promise of peace, a tranquillity of heart. How do we treat this book? In the month of Ramadan, the month of the Quran, are our lips moist with its recital?

The Prophet said: 'The Quran is an intercessor - something given permission to intercede, and it is rightfully believed in. Whoever puts it in front of them, it will lead them to Paradise; whoever puts it behind them, it will steer them to the hellfire'.

(Tabarani)

The Messenger said: 'And the Quran is a proof for you or against you'.

(Sahih Muslim)

The Quran can be a proof for us on the Day of Judgement or it could condemn us. Do we love it, revere it, ponder over its words and abide by it, or do we ignore it?

Abu Umaamah (ra) related that the Prophet said: 'Read the Quran, for indeed it will come on the Day of Standing [Judgement] as an intercessor for its companions'.

(Sahih Muslim)

Are you a companion of the Quran – do you adore it, memorise it and reflect over it? Do you find pleasure and comfort in its beauty; do you find happiness in sharing its company?

KEY MESSAGES

- The words and meaning of the Quran carry much weight and authority.
- The verses of the Quran are enough to influence people to change their lives through reminders to humanity of the importance of justice, peace and unity.
- Therefore, during Ramadan, we should approach the Quran with sincerity and discipline as it is said to be an intercessor. This means that if we approach it positively, the Quran could steer us to heaven on the Day of Judgement.
- In Islam, the maintenance of good character is very important. The Prophet (pbuh) reminded his companions of the vitality of good manners.
- Goodness can also be seen through the Prophet's actions towards others; his patience, loyalty and compassion.
- We must therefore care for those around us through actions such as checking on our neighbours, ensuring no one goes hungry and praying for those affected by illness.
- God is King of all beings
- God is ruled by no one and everything in nature also turns to God as God has supreme authority.
- Nothing has absolute power except for God. This means we should never be arrogant.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

Day 11

Tafsir: Surah Al-Falaq

Reminder 1: Forgiveness

Reminder 2: Using the Prophet's actions as an example

Surah Al-Falaq (The Daybreak)

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ

Say, 'I seek refuge in the Lord of daybreak

مِنْ شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ

From the evil of that which God created

وَمِنْ شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ إِذَا وَقَبَ

And from the evil of darkness when it settles

وَمِنْ شَرِّ النَّفَّاثَاتِ فِي الْعُقَدِ

And from the evil of the blowers in knots

وَمِنْ شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ

And from the evil of an envier when they envy.'

Surah Al-Falaq Tafsir

‘I seek God's refuge from the evil of all creatures.’

The most suitable and effective prayer for seeking refuge from evil is from our Creator, for God is in any case dominant over all creatures and is aware of all evil, including that which we know, as well as that which we do not know.

God has not created any creature for the sake of evil; all God's work is for the sake of good and has a special purpose. So sometimes, as a result of this, evil can come about.

In Surah Al-Falaq, humankind is praying to God to protect them from firstly the evil that has already taken place, and secondly from the evil that has not yet taken place.

The word ‘hasad’ means that a person feels unhappy at the better fortune that God has granted to another, and wishes that it is taken away from the other person and given to him or her, or at least that the other person is deprived of it.

Reminder: Forgiveness

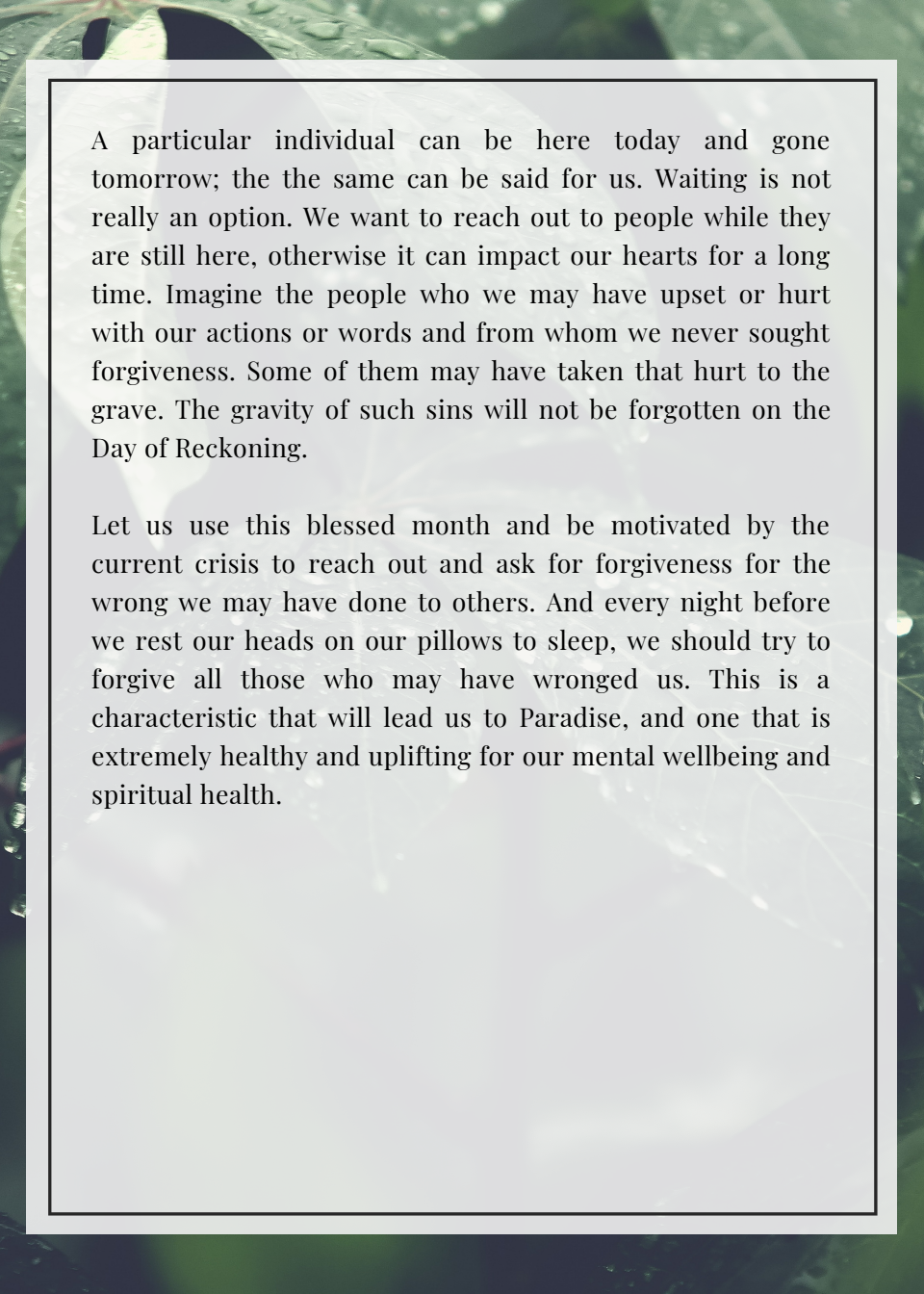
It is our duty to go through Ramadan positively. To do that we need to address all the factors that may possibly be a reason or a barrier against us gaining the pleasure of God.

During the first ten days, let us take the time to make amends with anyone we feel we may have wronged or upset. This includes family members who we don't often speak to, friends, neighbours and associates. We need to seek forgiveness from anyone we've misreated. This is a very difficult thing to do – and for most of us, our pride or raw emotion will get in the way.

But it is an act that is beloved to God. One of the most beautiful internal convictions, which is healthy for both our mind and soul, is not to harbour any ill feelings in our hearts against someone; this is the pinnacle of good attitude and one that will only bring us closer to God, the Almighty.

Abdullah ibn Amr narrates that the Messenger of God said: 'The merciful are shown mercy by Ar-Rahman. Be merciful on the earth, and you will be shown mercy by the One who is above the heavens. The womb is named after Ar-Rahman, so whoever maintains the ties of kinship, God maintains a tie to them, and whoever severs them, God severs ties to'.

(Tirmidhi)



A particular individual can be here today and gone tomorrow; the the same can be said for us. Waiting is not really an option. We want to reach out to people while they are still here, otherwise it can impact our hearts for a long time. Imagine the people who we may have upset or hurt with our actions or words and from whom we never sought forgiveness. Some of them may have taken that hurt to the grave. The gravity of such sins will not be forgotten on the Day of Reckoning.

Let us use this blessed month and be motivated by the current crisis to reach out and ask for forgiveness for the wrong we may have done to others. And every night before we rest our heads on our pillows to sleep, we should try to forgive all those who may have wronged us. This is a characteristic that will lead us to Paradise, and one that is extremely healthy and uplifting for our mental wellbeing and spiritual health.

Reminder: Using the Prophet's actions as our example

Rabi'ah bin Ka'b Al Aslami (ra) was a servant of the Messenger of God and also one of the people of As-Suffah. He said, 'I used to spend my night in the company of the Messenger of God and used to put up water for his ablutions. One day he said to me, "Ask something of me". I said: "I request for your companionship in Jannah". He inquired, "Is there anything else?" I said, "That is all". He said, "Then help me in your request by multiplying your prostrations"'.

(Sahih Muslim)

There was a terrace at the end of the Prophet's Mosque which is called As-Suffah in Arabic. Poor people who were taught by him used to live there. This hadith evidently shows the importance of good actions and the faithful following of the practice of the Prophet.



KEY MESSAGES

- We should all try to follow the practice of the Prophet, whether it be through how he treated others or how he prayed and worshipped God.
- During Ramadan, we should try and remove any barriers between us and God. These may be done by reconciling lost friendships, seeking forgiveness if we hurt someone and prayer.
- Humility and asking for forgiveness are loved by God. If we forgive others, it is said that we may also be shown forgiveness by God.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

Day 12

Tafsir: Surah Al-Ikhlās

99 Names of God: The Beneficent

Reminder: The month of the Quran

Surah Al Ikhlas (Sincerity)

Say: He is God, the One and Only

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

God, the Eternal, Absolute;

اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ

He begetteth not, nor is He begotten;

لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ

And there is none like unto Him.

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

Tafsir: Surah Al-Ikhlās (Sincerity)

This surah was revealed in response to unbelievers challenging the Prophet to describe the unseen Lord they were being asked to believe in. Their purpose was to make life difficult for him by ridiculing the idea of a God whom they cannot see or touch.

This short surah beautifully reminds us of God's unique qualities which are a fundamental aspect of our belief, our tawhid:

- God is unique and One (Ahad)
- God is the eternal refuge and independent of all things (Samad)
- God was not born and does not give birth
- Nothing can be compared to God

Abu Hurairah (ra) reported: The Messenger of God said, 'Surah Ikhlas is equivalent to a third of the Quran'.

(Muslim)

Anas (ra) reported: A man said 'O Messenger of God! I love surah Ikhlas'. Muhammad said, 'Your love for it will admit you to Heaven'.

(Tirmidhi)

99 Names of God: The Beneficent



Ar Rahman The Beneficent

We say this name multiple times throughout the day. Before everything we do, we say ‘Bismillah hi-Rahman nir-Raheem’ which translates to ‘In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.’ We mention it when we pray (in Surah Al-Fatihah). It is mentioned at the beginning of every chapter of the Quran (except one) and there is an entire chapter in the Quran named ‘Rahman’ (Chapter 55). Regarding this chapter, the Prophet stated, ‘Everything has an adornment and the adornment of the Quran is Surah Ar-Rahman.’

Ar-Rahman is the one who showers all of creation with blessings and prosperity with no disparity. Ar-Rahman is the one who is most loving, most kind and most merciful. Ar-Rahman's mercy is perfect, inclusive and endless. Ar-Rahman is the One who is overflowing with forgiveness and love, continually pouring it upon all of creation.

Rahman, along with Rahim, are derived from the root r-h-m. This connects tenderness, gentleness, kindness, love, mercy and pity, to show favour and goodness and to have all that is required for beneficence. The root also links to the Arabic for 'womb', meaning 'that which provides protection and nourishment' and 'that from which all creation is bought into being'.

Rahman denotes the love and mercy from the Creator which led to creation, meaning that all of physical creation and its sustenance is a direct result of Rahman.

This rahma or mercy is a characteristic that God has made dominant: in sacred tradition, it is written, 'When God decreed the creation, God pledged "My mercy prevails over my wrath"'.

Ibn Qayyum states that Rahman describes the quality of abounding grace which is inherent in and inseparable from the Almighty. Rahman and Rahim are both derived from the root word 'Rahmat', signifying tenderness and requiring the exercise of beneficence, thus comprising the ideas of love and mercy. Ar-Rahman is said to be the beneficent One, whose love and mercy are manifested in the creation of the world. Al-Rahim is the merciful one, whose love and mercy are manifested in the state that comes after.

Reminder: The month of the Quran

‘The month of Ramadan is that in which the Quran was revealed, a guidance for mankind and clear messages giving guidance and distinguishing between right and wrong.’

(Quran, Surah Baqarah, 2:185)

Ramadan is called the month of the Quran because the Quran was first revealed in Ramadan, on the Night of Power (Laylat Al-Qadr). The Prophet (pbuh) would devote himself to the Quran and would even review the whole Quran with the Angel Gabriel during this month. During his last Ramadan, the Prophet read the Quran to Gabriel twice.

Imam Malik was the greatest scholar of hadith of his time, and thousands of students would flock to the Masjid of the Prophet in Medina to learn from him. However, when Ramadan came, he would stop all his hadith studies and devote himself to the Quran.

Did you set yourself a Quran target for Ramadan? Are you spending any time in a way which you consider to be wasteful in Ramadan? This is all time that you could spend in devotion to your Lord. This is precious time, which one day, you may look back upon and wish you had spent differently.

KEY MESSAGES

- The month of Ramadan is special because it is when the Quran was first revealed on the Night of Power.
- Many spiritual people devote the days and nights of Ramadan to the Quran. The Prophet would read the whole Quran with the Angel Gabriel.
- Have we set ourselves any targets to read the Quran in Ramadan?
- God is truly the Most Loving, Kind and Merciful (Ar-Rahman).
- We mention this name of God multiple times in the day during prayer.
- Rahman means that God is merciful and loving to all of his creation. We know that God's mercy exceeds his Wrath.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

Day 13

Reminder 1: Humanity

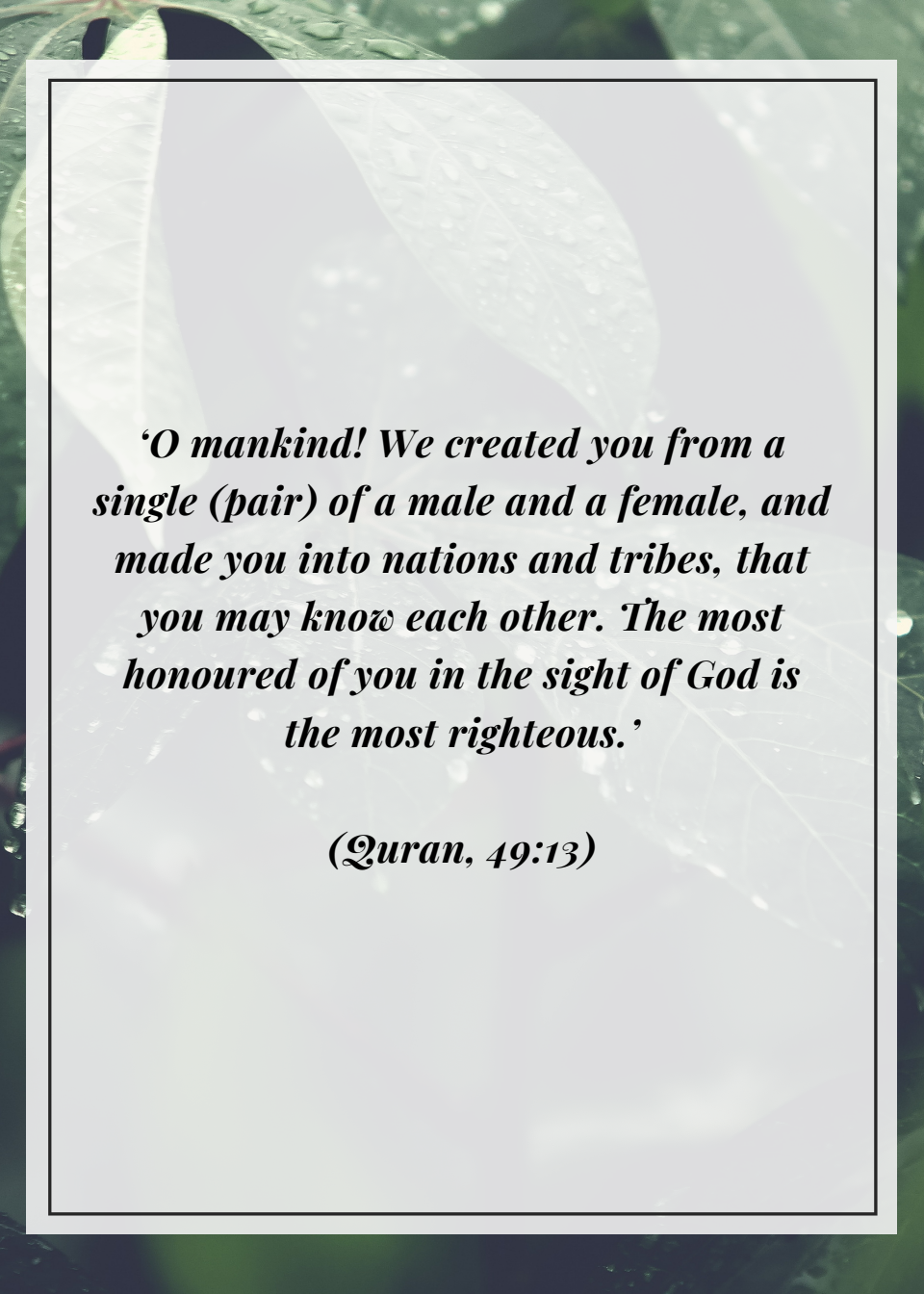
99 Names of God: The Source of Faith

Reminder 2: The Importance of Fasting

Reminder: Humanity

The study of Humanity is fascinating to learn about, encompassing who we are and where we came from. Though we may struggle to know the name of an ancestor who lived a few generations ago, we can be sure of the ancestor at the very start of our family. Our entire family – the human family.

Muslims believe in the creation of Adam and Eve, the first people from whom the whole of humanity sprang forth. The Quran often refers to mankind as the ‘Children of Adam’. All Muslim believers, irrespective of language, race, age or background are seen as a part of a whole. Despite the great diversity of the human race – our many languages, colours, customs and traditions – ultimately we are one, often known as ‘the umma’. The fact that human beings travelled the globe, cultivating their own societies and languages, becoming ‘different’, is something that is to be celebrated. The Quran says that this is a part of God’s plan. Our diversity should not be the cause of hatred and enmity; rather we are taught to rejoice in our differences and learn from one another.



‘O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. The most honoured of you in the sight of God is the most righteous.’

(Quran, 49:13)

99 Names of God: The Source of Faith

المؤمن

Al-Mu'min The Source of Faith

Al-Mu'min is the One who faithfully bestows the gift of peace, safety and security. The One who grants freedom from fear and illuminates the heart with faith and is the most trustworthy.

Al-Mu'min is derived from the root 'a-m-n' which connotes:

- To be secure, safe and free from fear
- To be quiet and tranquil
- To grant protection and safeguard
- To be trusted in
- To believe in

The word imaan, often simply translated as 'faith' or 'belief' comes from the same root and could be translated as 'has been granted peace and security'. The word 'amin', often translated simply as 'amen', also comes from the same root, and could be translated as 'in this we trust' or 'in this we are free from fear'. Furthermore, the word 'amaanah' which is translated as trust, also shares the root. The 'a-m-n' root is also the source of the name Al-Muhaimin - The Protector.

One of the meanings of the name 'Al-Mu'min' is 'the Granter of Security'. It is promised that the believers who remember Al-Mu'min will be given security in the hereafter. Those who follow the instructions of Al-Mu'min and remain honest characters will receive his bountiful rewards, blessings and mercy.

Makkah is described as the 'Land of Security' by God, due to the special religious observances that are prescribed for it. On account of the reverence that is owed to it, its animals are not to be hunted and its plants not to be picked, thus security is extended to every living being.

Another meaning of Al-Mu'min is the Giver, or the Source of Faith. God's messengers were sent to us, and the Quran was revealed through them. Through this, we are taught of God's attributes of perfection.

The divine name 'Al-Mu'min' is mentioned once in Surah Al-Hashr. 'The Sovereign, the Holy, the Bestower of Peace, the Granter of Security'

Reminder: The importance of fasting

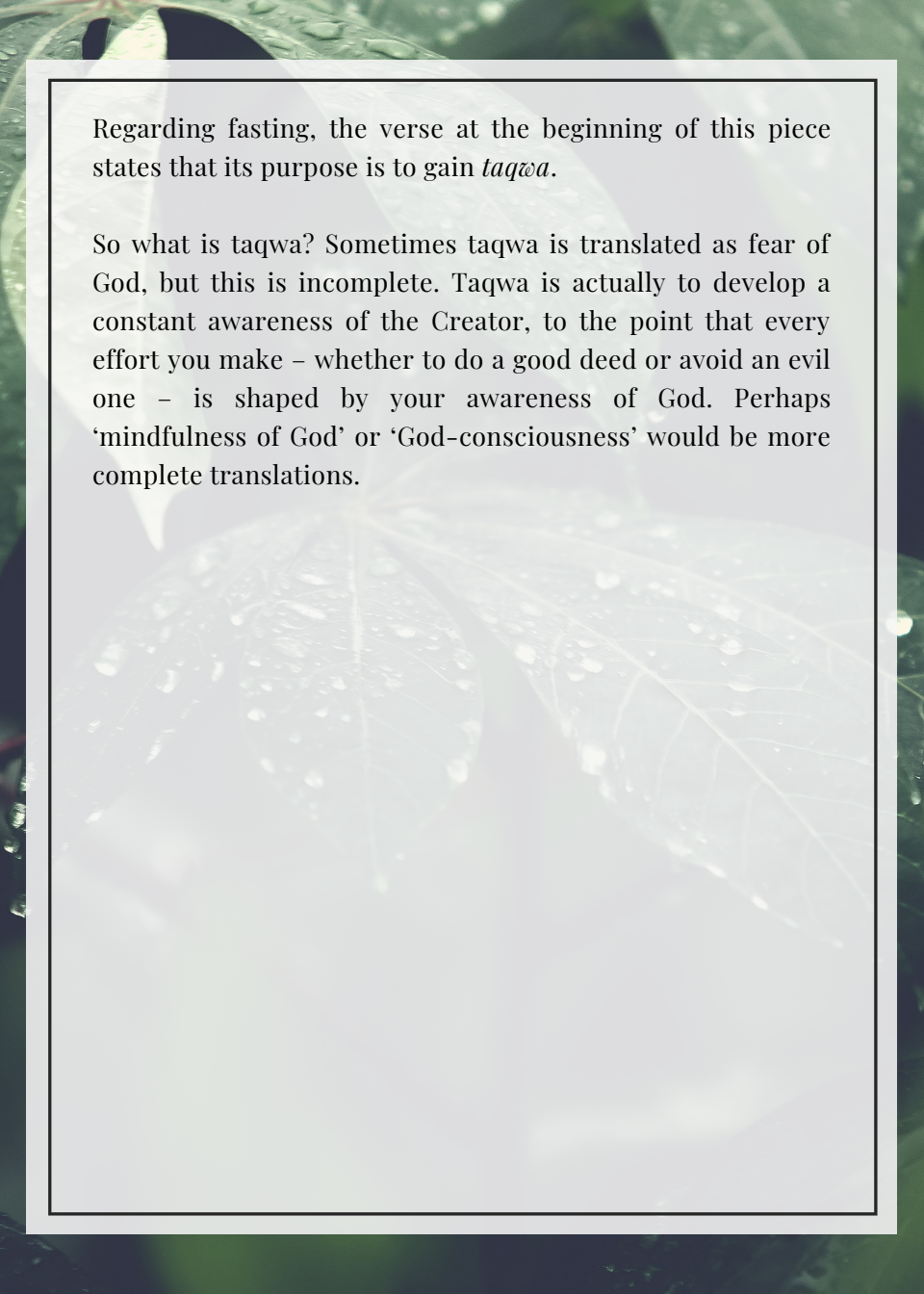
‘O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become people of *taqwa*.’

(Quran, Surah Baqarah 2:183)

Islam is not a new invention. God is reminding us here that the Islam revealed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is an ancient way of life that was followed by a great many peoples before the last prophet, and that God has been prescribing fasting to mankind since the ancient times.

One of the beauties of the way of the prophets is that it is a natural way of life (‘deen al-fitrah’). What this means is that it is not unnatural – it is not designed to be awkward and cause harm, but instead, it is perfectly suited to the needs of human beings; the teachings are supposed to improve our quality of life, not worsen it. So that even if a teaching seems difficult, there will be some special benefit in it. Even in the rituals of Islam, there is a purpose and a benefit, so much so that often the Quran actually spells out the purpose of a rule or ritual.

Regarding prayer, the Quran explains that regular prayer protects against immorality and wrongdoing (Surah Hujurat 29:45).



Regarding fasting, the verse at the beginning of this piece states that its purpose is to gain *taqwa*.

So what is taqwa? Sometimes taqwa is translated as fear of God, but this is incomplete. Taqwa is actually to develop a constant awareness of the Creator, to the point that every effort you make – whether to do a good deed or avoid an evil one – is shaped by your awareness of God. Perhaps ‘mindfulness of God’ or ‘God-consciousness’ would be more complete translations.

KEY MESSAGES

- Fasting is meant not to be a burden, but a time for blessing.
- Even though fasting may seem very difficult, there are special benefits to it, ordained on us by God. There is a purpose for everything.
- It also allows us to develop our taqwa, meaning our God consciousness and reminds us of God throughout the day.
- God created Adam and Eve, the first people who began the human race.
- In the Quran, we are often referenced to as ‘children of Adam’, showing that we are all united, despite different races, genders and traditions. We are one. This is called ‘the Umma’.
- It is important in Islam that we do not dispute and argue due to any differences we may have, but instead grow and learn from one another.
- God is the source of faith.
- God grants us security in this life and in the hereafter.
- God also provides us with our faith through prophetic revelations.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

Day 14

Tafsir: Surah Nasr

Reminder 1: Appreciating the Quran

Reminder 2: Difficulty in Fasting

Surah An-Nasr

ذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ

When the victory of God has come and He opens up your way,

وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا

And you see the people entering into the religion of God in multitudes,

فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا

Then celebrate the praise of your Lord and ask forgiveness of Him. Indeed, He is ever accepting of repentance.

Tafsir: Surah An-Nasr

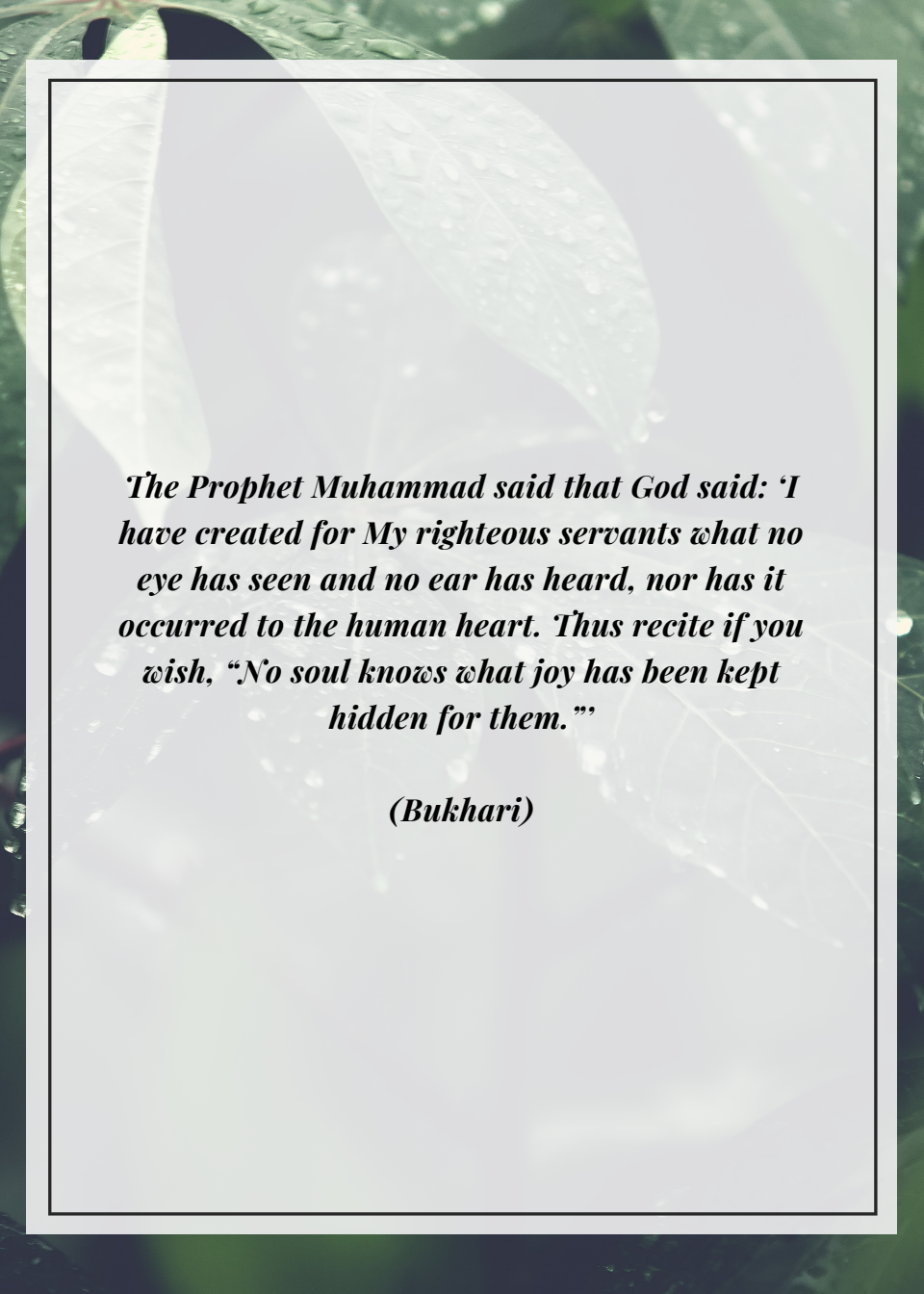
Surah An-Nasr (where the word 'Nasr' means 'divine assistance') was the last full chapter of the Qur'an to be revealed and signified that the passing of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was near. This can be seen from the theme of the surah: it speaks of a time when God 'opens up' the way of the Muslims, and when people are entering Islam not in small numbers, but 'in crowds', and importantly, of their own free will. For the majority of Muhammad's life post-prophethood, the Muslims were persecuted, and only relatively small numbers of people were embracing the religion: so, this surah refers to something new, which was when Muslims made their peaceful return to Makkah in C.630 AD. This was the greatest victory for them, since they were free to return to their home city, and people were free to embrace and practice their religion without fear of persecution. The reason, then, that this surah signified the death of the Prophet is that it spoke of a time (soon to come) when his job of spreading the message of Islam was essentially done.

In the remainder of the surah, God qualifies this victory for Muslims, by reminding them that it was only given to them by God's will, and that they should therefore not forget to praise God for allowing them this victory.

This surah was not only a reminder to the Muslims at the time, but to us as well. Whenever we succeed in our endeavours, it can be easy to fall into the trap of believing that we alone were the architect of our fate. However, for all the effort we put in, there are still many other factors out of our control: if any one of these were to go wrong, we may not have attained the same successful outcome. It is absolutely fine to feel proud of the effort we put in when working towards our goals, but that should stop short of becoming arrogant. Whatever the context, there will always be factors that we can control, and those which we cannot. We should do our utmost to maximise the potential of the factors we do have control over but accept that there are many other things which have to go right in order for us to attain success. Indeed, God says in Surah Ali Imran (3:160):

‘If God is your helper, none can overcome you, and if he withdraws his help, who is there who can help you after him?’

When things go well, we should be humble and grateful in the face of this good fortune and remember to praise God.



The Prophet Muhammad said that God said: 'I have created for My righteous servants what no eye has seen and no ear has heard, nor has it occurred to the human heart. Thus recite if you wish, "No soul knows what joy has been kept hidden for them."'

(Bukhari)

Reminder: Appreciating the Quran

We are aware that God sent His first revelation to his beloved Messenger (pbuh) during the month of Ramadan:

‘The month of Ramadan in which the Quran was revealed as a guidance for mankind, clear messages giving guidance, and distinguishing between right and wrong. So, whoever of you witnesses this month, let them fast.’

(Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:185)

Ramadan is a celebration of the very moment – in time and place – that God chose to communicate with His creation. For this very reason, it is the month of mercy, forgiveness, and ultimately a means of salvation. Without the Quran, we would have been left in utter darkness. We would not have known our Lord, what He requires of us, or how to conduct our lives. The Prophet Muhammad understood the darkness of ignorance by witnessing the chaos and oppression of life in Makkah.

Makkah was rife with idol worship and oppression of many kinds. Small arguments led to wars and death. Sexism was a normal feature of life as a woman. And horrifically among a few tribes, tender baby girls were buried alive in desert sands. Drunkenness and partying alongside social class structures with egocentric, selfish behaviour often led to misery. Stories of slavery from that time bring tears to the eyes.

It was in these dark times that God revealed the Quran during the month of Ramadan as a means of providing guidance, so that we can live happier and better lives. It showed us the difference between right and wrong.

The word Quran linguistically means 'the most recited'. Should we not celebrate the month of Ramadan by reading the Quran? Is this not truly a blessing for us, especially in the times we are living in? We should focus on trying to read with understanding and then reflecting on the guidance.

Let us use this blessed month to build our relationship with the book that guides our lives. Let us rejoice in the words that bring gentleness, comfort, and light to our souls, no matter how much darkness they may have faced through this past year.

Reminder: Difficulty in Fasting

‘Fast for a specific number of days, but if one of you is ill, or on a journey, on other days later. For those who can fast only with extreme difficulty, there is a way to compensate- feed a needy person. But if anyone does good of his own accord, it is better for him, and fasting is better for you, if only you knew’.

(Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:184)

These are special days dedicated to fasting and we should do our utmost to fast in them. When we are well enough to fast, then even if it seems a little challenging, God reminds us that it is still better for us.

Sometimes we make the foolish mistake of thinking that anything easy is good for us and anything difficult is bad for us. Yet that is clearly not true: you cannot learn a new skill, or language, or subject without some difficulty and determination. Homework is not always fun; preparing for exams is not all fun! Too often, we look at the here and now, whilst God is encouraging us to look at what is good for our future – what will make us better and stronger people.

Islam is a natural religion, so it is designed to suit humankind and to make us better people. However, people are all different, and their circumstances change. Being a

practical religion, Islam allows for that, and so fasting can be delayed when it may cause actual harm to a person, for example when they are pregnant, ill, weak or on a journey.

This is such an important teaching that God points it out immediately after the verse that prescribes fasting as a duty on us.

After mentioning it in verse 184, He mentions it again in the subsequent verse:

‘And anyone who is ill or on a journey should make up for the lost days by fasting on other days later. God wants ease for you, not hardship.’

KEY MESSAGES

- Since fasting is not meant to be a burden, those who are ill, elderly or travelling have the choice of whether or not to fast.
- Although fasting is difficult, we should try our best to do it.
- The Quran allows us all to distinguish what is right from what is wrong and provided guidance against immoral practices such as sexism and the oppression of slaves: Islam liberated the oppressed.
- The Quran was intended to guide us to the straight path.
- The Quran should be read with understanding of the meaning and then one should try and reflect on God's words.



Thank you for engaging with our content, we hope it was thought-provoking and will act as the beginning of both further discussion and your own research!

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