

What to do/pray in Ramadan

(How to maximise your benefits in Ramadan)

Compiled by: Iqbal Lambat

Prior edition reviewed by:

- **Imam Uzair Akbar** and **Mufti J Akbar**, Holland Park Mosque, Brisbane, Australia
- **Imam Y Patel** – Secretary, Jamiat-ul-Ulama, Mpumalanga, South Africa

Contents:

- [Have the correct attitude \(mindset\) to benefit from Ramadan](#)
- [Fast](#)
- [Perform your obligatory duties – they attain the equivalence of 70 obligatory duties in another month](#)
- [Each night should be passed in prayer](#)
- [Perform voluntary acts \(nawafil\) as these attain the equivalent of an obligatory act \(fard\) in Ramadan](#)
- [Share with others](#)
- [Provide a meal to people who are fasting](#)
- [Beg for mercy in the first 10 days](#)
- [Beg for forgiveness in the middle 10 days](#)
- [Beg for protection from hell in the last 10 days](#)

1. Have the correct attitude (mindset) to benefit from Ramadan

To benefit from Ramadan you need to have the correct attitude/approach/mindset. The Prophet is reported to have said: "Many who fast obtain nothing from their fasting but hunger and thirst, and many who pray during the night obtain nothing from their night prayers but wakefulness." (Reported by Al Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, and Al-Hakim, and is said to be authentic on the condition of Al-Bukhari.). The implication is clear – you will not benefit from Ramadan by merely fasting and/or praying. You need to be sincere in your religious duties and avoid behaviour that is contrary to the laws and spirit of Islam. For example, one should refrain from false speech and hurting others through gossip, etc. The Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said: "Whoever does not give up false speech (telling lies and the like) and acting upon it, Allah is not in need of his leaving his food and drink (i.e. Allah will not accept his fasting)." (Reported by Al-Bukhari, Ahmad, and others.).

The Prophet (PBUH) also stated that: "It (Ramadan) is the month of endurance and the reward of endurance is Paradise." Endurance is interpreted by some scholars to mean patience – sabir. You should exercise patience with your fast, your relationships and communication with others, and in your activities and actions.

Use the opportunity to rejuvenate your faith

Ramadan is a month in which you should rejuvenate your faith. Dr. Ahmad Kutty, a senior lecturer at the Islamic Institute of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, states¹:

"Ramadan is the most blessed month in the Islamic calendar. It is primarily a spiritual training course intended to help us cultivate essential virtues and skills in order to lead a meaningful life. Most often we live at a very superficial level of our existence, forgetting our true essence and identity as human beings. In other words, we become totally preoccupied with the physical and material dimensions, forgetting the spiritual core of our personalities. Ramadan, therefore, comes to remind us of who we truly are

and how we can discipline ourselves in such a way that we are fully awake to our full spiritual potential.”

Take stock, repent and seek forgiveness

You should also take stock, repent and seek forgiveness. This is a good time to have a look at yourself. The Prophet (PBUH) said², “The smart man is the one who takes stock of himself and strives to do that which will benefit him after death, and the helpless one is the one who follows his own whims and desires and engages in wishful thinking, (assuming that Allah will forgive him regardless of what he does and that he does not need to strive to good deeds).”

Ramadan is not a month of lavish tables

Very often the focus in Ramadan is on having ‘special’ foods. In this regard, the late Sheikh Sayyed Mutawalli Ad-Darsh, former head of the United Kingdom Shari`ah council stated³:

"The whole business of lavishing tables with delicious foods, in contrast to normal attitude during the rest of the year, is something that clearly negates the purpose of Ramadan. "Today people have developed a strange habit of going to extremes in filling stomach with foods, as if they are saying that “Ramadan is month of food” not “month of fasting”! "However, Ramadan is a reminder to Muslims to be caring, compassionate and kind. Rather than indulging ourselves in trivialities, we should be making an effort to save more during Ramadan and giving to the less fortunate."

2. Fast

The Almighty has instructed us to fast in the month of Ramadan. The Quran states: "The month of Ramadan is that in which was revealed the Qur'an, wherein is guidance for mankind and the clear signs of guidance and distinction. Thus whosoever among you witness the month must fast...." (al-Baqarah: 184).

Unless you have a permitted reason for missing a fast, you can never make up for a lost Ramadan fast with the same blessings. Dr Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, an author and prominent Muslim scholar, states⁴: “It is generally known that no days are equivalent to the days of Ramadan except the days of another Ramadan. At the same time, all days of Ramadan are originally fast-days, so that one can never make up the missed fast-days of Ramadan during another Ramadan. That is why Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, said: **"Whoever did not observe fast for one day of Ramadan for no legal excuse or on account of a disease can never make it up later."** (Narrated on the authority of Abu Hurairah, by Al-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, An- Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, Ibn Khuzaimah, and Al-Bayhaqi, and the quoted version is At-Tirmidhi's.) However, one of its narrators is weak.

“It was also narrated, on the authority of Abu Hurairah, that a man did not observe fast in Ramadan deliberately with no legal excuses. Hence, Abu Hurairah said: **"Even if he fasts for a whole year, he will still not have made up for that day."** It was also narrated, on the authority of Ibn Masu`d, that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: **"If anyone breaks his fast one day in Ramadan without a concession granted to him by Allah, a perpetual fast will not atone for it."**

3. Perform your obligatory duties – they attain the equivalence of 70 obligatory duties in another month

The Prophet (PBUH) said: "...and he who fulfils an obligatory duty in it (Ramadan) will be like one who fulfils seventy obligatory duties in another month." (Mishkat). What a great benefit! So, focus on your obligatory duties – prayer, charity, reading the Quran, belief, amongst numerous others. The focus should be on obligatory acts – only once you have performed these should you focus on sunnah and nawafil acts.

Acts that scholars encourage Muslims to focus on in this month are:

- Performing your obligatory prayers;
- Pay your zakat. However, you should not wait for Ramadan to pay your zakat unless you have chosen Ramadan as your zakat calculation month (similar to a financial/tax year end). Zakat should be paid immediately after it has been calculated.
- Reading the Quran. The Almighty states in the Quran: "Read ye, therefore, as much of the Quran as may be easy for you....." (73:20).

Reading the Quran in Ramadan

Due to the close connection between Ramadan and the scriptures, scholars encourage Muslims to complete reading the Quran not just once but numerous times in Ramadan. The Angel Gabriel used to sit with the Prophet (PBUH) every day during Ramadan so that the latter could recite all that had been revealed so far of the Qur'an. In his final year, the Prophet recited the entire Qur'an twice in Ramadan. Narrated Ibn Abbas:Gabriel used to meet him (the Prophet (PBUH)) every night of Ramadan to teach him the Quran. (Bukhari, volume 1).

Muslims today continue the tradition of reading the entire Qur'an at least once during Ramadan. Ælfwine Mischler, an author and editor states⁵: "In Muslim countries, it is not at all unusual in this month to see many people reading the Qur'an while riding the bus or metro to and from work. Others find time early in the morning, late at night, or at intervals throughout the day. Many others read or recite the Qur'an during Tarawih Prayers, which are held only during Ramadan, or in private late night Prayers called Tahajjud."

Scholars encourage Muslims to not only read as much as they can of the Quran, but also to ponder on its meanings. Completion of reading the Quran x number of times in Ramadan has a lower value than a person who read it only once but contemplated on the words and meaning of the Quran. If you do not understand Arabic read in parallel from a translation or seek guidance by reading *tafsir* (commentaries of the Qur'an) in any language.

"The Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have discouraged the act of some people at the end of times whose main concern is to recite as much as they can of the Qur'an while their readings find no application in reality. When we read the Qur'an, our hearts should move, our limbs should taste the deep sense of awe and homage, our minds should follow the outpouring of meanings and the never-ending moral lessons, and above all our readiness to apply what we read and turn it into a living reality should be on the maximum state of alert and at full swing." (Islamonline fatwa division).

4. Each night should be passed in prayer

The Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said (with regards to Ramadan): "Allah has appointed the observance of fasting during it as an obligatory duty, and the passing of its night in prayer as a voluntary

practice." (Mishkat). The Prophet (PBUH) also said: "Whoever establishes prayers during the nights of Ramadan faithfully out of sincere faith and hoping to attain Allah's rewards, all his past sins will be forgiven." (Bukhari, volume 1, Hadith number 36).

Scholars interpret "passing the night in prayer" as referring to performing Tarawih and Tahajjud prayers. Both these prayers are explained in a separate leaflet.

5. Perform voluntary acts (nawafil) as these attain the equivalent of an obligatory act (fard) in Ramadan

The Prophet (PBUH) states: "If someone draws near to Allah during it (Ramadan) with some good act he will be like one who fulfils an obligatory duty in another month...."

Ramadan is a month in which special countenance and blessings are showered on believers. Muslims are encouraged to perform all their Sunnah and voluntary prayers as the reward is the equivalent of a fard (obligatory) act. You should also be charitable - every cent given in voluntary charity in Ramadan will be multiplied (for reward). Charity also encompasses helping people in difficulty, being kind, offering advice, etc. Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Charity is obligatory every day on every joint of a human being. If one helps a person in matters concerning his riding animal by helping him to ride it or by lifting his luggage on to it, all this will be regarded as charity. A good word, and every step one takes to offer the compulsory congregational prayer, is regarded as charity; and guiding somebody on the road is regarded as charity." (Bukhari).

6. Share with others

The Prophet (PBUH) stated: "It (Ramadan) is the month of sharing with others....." Ramadan is a month in which we should have sympathy with the poor, Muslim or non-Muslim. Narrated Ibn Abbas: Allah's Apostle (PBUH) was the most generous of all the people, and he used to reach the peak in generosity in the month of Ramadan. (Bukhari, volume 1, Hadith number 5).

In addition you should focus on your relations with your family, neighbours and friends. You should be generous towards them, share meals with them and assist them as much as possible. The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Of the dinar you spend as a contribution in Allah's path, or to set free a slave, or as sadaqah given to the needy, or to support your family, the one yielding the greatest reward is that which you spent on your family." (Muslim).

7. Provide a meal to people who are fasting

The Prophet (PBUH) said: "If someone gives one who has been fasting something with which to break his fast it will provide forgiveness of his sins and save him from Hell, and he will have a reward equal to his without his reward being diminished in any respect." (Mishkat).

If you give a person who has been fasting something with which to break his/her fast you will gain a reward equal to his/her without his/her reward being diminished in any respect. The provision need not be elaborate. "Allah gives this reward to him who gives one who has been fasting some milk mixed with water, or a date, or a drink of water with which to break his fast. Anyone who gives a full meal to one who has been fasting will be given a drink from my tank (Hawd) by Allah and will not thirst till he enters Paradise." (Mishkat).

Giving food to a fasting person is the ideal opportunity to do good neighbourly (in the greater context) deeds. The opportunity should also be used to give food to poor persons.

8. Beg for mercy in the first 10 days

The Prophet (PBUH) stated that the first part (first ten days) of the month are for mercy: "It is a month whose beginning is mercy....." Therefore in the first ten days of Ramadan one should beg Allah for Mercy. Ask Allah: "O Allah, shower your mercy on my family, on our homes, on our neighbours and on the poor."

9. Beg for forgiveness in the middle 10 days

The Prophet (PBUH) said the second ten days of the month are for forgiveness: "It is a month whose.....middle is forgiveness....." Therefore in the second ten days, you should make abundant istighfaar (repentance). The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Gabriel (A.S.) came to me and said, 'Curse to him who found the blessed month of Ramadan and let it pass by without begging forgiveness.'" (Bukhari).

The Prophet (PBUH) also said: "A person should perform four things abundantly in this month. Two of the things you will be able to please your Lord with. The remaining two things you cannot do without."

Scholars interpret this hadith as follows:

The two things in which a person can obtain the pleasure of Allah are:

- reciting the Shahada abundantly - "there is none worthy of worship but Allah and that Muhammed (PBUH) is the messenger of Allah".
- reciting Istighfaar abundantly.

The two things a person cannot do without are:

- begging Allah for entry into Paradise;
- begging Allah for protection from hell.

There must be sincerity in the istighfaar/repentance. The Prophet (PBUH) has stated that whoever makes abundant genuine istighfaar - Allah will release him of his difficulties.

The leaflet, how to beg for forgiveness provides insights into how we should pray and conduct ourselves when begging for forgiveness.

10. Beg for protection from hell in the last 10 days

The Prophet (PBUH) said: "It is a month whose.....end is freedom from hell." A person should beg Allah to protect them from hell. "O Allah give us good in this world and in the hereafter."

Freedom from hell is also the reward for complying with the requirements set by the Almighty and the Prophet (PBUH) for the month.

Narrated Abu Huraira: When the Prophet (PBUH) stated that his people would be granted forgiveness on the last night of Ramadan and was asked whether it was Laylat al-Qadr, he replied, "No, but a workman is paid his full wages only when he has finished his work." (Mishkat).

Narrated Aisha: With the start of the last ten days of Ramadan, the Prophet (PBUH) used to tighten his waist belt (i.e. hard work) and used to pray all the night, and used to keep his family awake for the prayers. (Bukhari, volume 3, Hadith number 241).

You should focus your energies in the last ten days in extra prayer and begging the Almighty for protection from the fire of hell.

What to do in the last ten days?

Dr. Muhammad M. Abu Laylah, professor of the Islamic Studies & Comparative Religions at Al-Azhar University states:

“The duties of the Muslim in this last third of Ramadan is to try his best to perfect his fasting, to avoid any shortcomings or sins that can harm his fasting, to offer more prayers, preferably in *jama`ah* (congregation), to advance in reading the Qur'an, to make *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), to help others to be more committed to religion, to enter *i`tikaf* if it is possible for him/her, and to remember that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) used to give extra attention to the last ten days of Ramadan. He could hardly sleep, and his family used also to stay in vigilance with him. The Prophet's generosity in this month and particularly in the last ten days was compared to a fast wind.

“We should not miss to remind you and all Muslims to try to settle disputes. It is the best occasion to forgive one another and forget about all enmities and grudges. We should come out of Ramadan in a better shape, understanding, and moral behavior. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) made it clear that **‘if any Muslim comes out of Ramadan without gaining forgiveness and goodness, he/she is a real loser.’**”

Sheikh Muhammad Iqbal Nadvi, Director and Imam of Al-Falah Islamic Center, Oakville, Ontario, Canada, and former Professor at King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, adds:

“Some of the duties may be outlined as follows:

1. Purification of one's soul from all sins and evaluating one's actions to be always in accordance with the teachings of Islam.
2. Exerting much effort to elevate the soul by doing a lot of good deeds.
3. Acting seriously and using every minute to gain protection from the Hell-fire.
4. Developing a sense of determination in one's soul that he or she will be always fearful and mindful of Allah and to continue with this spirit after Ramadan.”

Muslims are encouraged to spend the last ten days observing *I`tikaf* Muzammil H. Siddiqi, member of the Fiqh Council of North America states⁶: "*I`tikaf* in the last ten days of Ramadan in the *Masjid* (mosque) is a beautiful tradition of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). It is like a spiritual retreat. It is reported by `Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her, that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) used to observe *I`tikaf* during the last ten days of the month of Ramadan and he continued this practice until his death. After him, his wives carried on this practice of observing *I`tikaf* regularly. (Reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

“It is recommended that every Muslim make at least one *I`tikaf* in his/ her life. There must be at least a few people in every community who should do it in every *Masjid* every year to keep this tradition alive. Men should do *I`tikaf* in the *Masjid* so that they can pray in *Jama`ah* (congregation) and also offer the Friday prayers. Women can also do *I`tikaf*, but theirs must be at home for reasons of modesty and for their own convenience. There is a great blessing in *I`tikaf* and people who do it bring blessings upon themselves, upon their families, and upon the Muslim community at large.

“The Sunnah of *I'tikaf* is that one make the intention and begin the *I'tikaf* on the evening of the 20th of Ramadan from sunset time and continue until the sighting of the moon for `Edu-Fitr. During *I'tikaf* men should stay in the *Masjid* day and night and should not leave it except for the use of toilet or shower. They are allowed to eat also inside the *Masjid*, but if it is not convenient they may go outside and come back as soon as they finish.”

¹ Tips to benefit optimally from Ramadan – Islamonline – 26/9/05

² A piece of advice to welcome Ramadan – Islamonline – 25/10/03

³ Lavish tables during Ramadan – Islamonline – 28/10/03

⁴ Breaking Some Fast-days of Ramadan without Justification – Islamonline – 2 November 2003

⁵ Introduction to Ramadan – Islamonline – 22/10/03

⁶ *I'tikaf* in the Last Third of Ramadan – Islamonline – 12/11/03