

Reflections on Ramadan

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The month of Ramadan is a great and beautiful time of the year. During Ramadan, it is believed that Allah's blessings increase and His rewards for good deeds are multiplied. Muslims around the world use this month in particular to thank Allah for the blessings in their lives. May Allah help us benefit from this season of virtues and blessings and grant us His love, mercy and forgiveness now and forever, Amen.

The month of Ramadan is when the ayyat (verses) of the Qur'an, came as a guide to humankind, with clear signs for guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong). So every one of you (believers) who is present (at their home) during that month should spend it in fasting, but if any one is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (should be performed) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful. When My servants ask you concerning Me, I am indeed quite near: I listen and answer the call of every caller when he calls Me. Let them listen to My call, and believe in Me; so that they may be guided aright. (Al-Baqarah 2:185-186)

Ramadan is a period during the year for the purification of our bodies, minds and souls. It is a special time to grow closer in our faith and deeds towards Allah and each other. It is also a time to emphasize reflections upon Allah's blessing and bounty through expressed piety, self-discipline and patience. It is a time to show more generosity and to offer additional charity for the poor, which helps them throughout the coming year. Ramadan is the time to seek Allah's forgiveness and in return for each Muslim to forgive each other by reconciling differences that arose during the past year. It is a time to be thankful to Allah for His gift of Iman (faith).

During this time, one's intention is extra sincere and to fast through the 30-day period. Believers abstain from food and liquids during daylight hours**. Believers also avoid confrontations and desires to nullify bad words and deeds as well as keep their body, mind and soul clear of intoxicants and impurities during daylight hours.

Ramadan does not alter the established daily (5) prayers and Muslims still maintain their prayer schedule. However, in most Muslim states there are decreased working hours (usually from 8 to 4 hours) most Believers spend time daily reading and reflecting upon Allah's message within Quran and attend Tarawih (evening) prayers where a 1/30th portion of the Quran is recited between evening (Marghrib) and night (Isha) prayers each day of Ramadan.

During the month of Ramadan, each Believer is required to give Zakat (2 percent of one's yearly income after maintenance expenses are extracted) and Sadaqah (giving charity without acknowledgement of who gave it). Muslims are called upon to be very charitable and generous--Give more to help the poor and needy and contribute generously for useful social and community projects.

During Ramadan, one's intention is to spend quality time with family and friends, be extra kind and courteous, and to reconcile disputes while forgiving and forgetting disagreements and quarrels. Believers are to avoid backbiting (gossiping), lying, cheating and anything which impedes manifesting good intentions and deeds. As Believers, we are called upon to be very good to all human beings--your friends and neighbors and share with your non-Muslim neighbors and co-workers this is your most blessed and sacred time of the year.

Ramadan is not a time of mourning or sadness for Muslims. It is a time of thankfulness to Allah. Give the greetings of Ramadan to each other and enjoy this beautiful time of this year.

** Note: Ramadan is especially easy for women who are pregnant, lactating, small children under the age of seven and those who are sick or have debilitating illnesses are absolved for fasting.