

FROM THE MINBAR

PLANNING FOR RAMADAN: IF WE FAIL TO PLAN; WE PLAN TO FAIL

Khutbah delivered by Imam Dr. ZijadDelic at SNMC on June 29th, 2012 corresponding to Sha'ban 9th, 1433 H.

BACKGROUND

Indeed all praise is for God, Lord of the worlds. Peace and blessings of God be upon Muhammad (S), his family, KhulafaiRashidin, all his Companions, and all those who follow in their footsteps until the Last Day. All praise is for God! We praise Him. We seek His help and ask for His forgiveness. We seek God's refuge from evils of ourselves and from our evil actions. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except God, alone, having no partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad (S) is His Messenger.

My dear brothers and sisters in Islam ~ *As Salamu 'AlaikumWaRahmatullahiWaBarakatuhu.*

INTRODUCTION

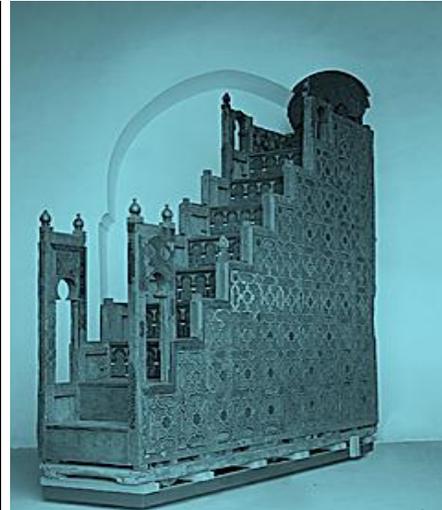
The blessed & most beautiful month is near and what better time to prepare for it than right now. The Sahabah (companions of Rasul) used to prepare for Ramadan six months in advance. So if we really want to make the best of this Ramadan then we need to prepare for it now! WE never know for how long we would live. Then there is NO doubt that we must make the best of it for the reward of EVERY good act in the month of Ramadan is multiplied many times over: The Prophet (S) said: "Whoever draws near to Allah during it (Ramadan) with a single characteristic from the characteristics of (voluntary) goodness, he/she is like whoever performs an obligatory act in other times. And whoever performs an obligatory act during it, he/she is like whoever performed seventy obligatory acts in other times." (Ibn Khuzaymah)

If there was a 75% sale on in the shops surely people would go crazy and even camp all night outside in order to be the first in the store to take advantage of this special offer. So in the same way why should we not take advantage of the immense rewards that are available in Ramadan? The best way we can make the most of this Ramadan and grab the immense rewards that are available is to start preparing for it NOW not on the first day of Ramadan.

Why Ramadan is the month of opportunities? It is the best of Months; the Quran was revealed therein; it is the month of Blessing, Mercy & Forgiveness; Allah Himself gives special rewards for one who fasts in Ramadan; Doors of Heaven are opened & Doors of Hell are closed; Shayatin are chained; Rewards multiplied from 10 to 700 times; believing community is blessed in Ramadan with a Night better than 1000 months...

5 REASONS TO PLAN IN RAMADAN

Have you noticed that each year, Ramadan goes by faster and faster? Personally, I can remember details of Ramadan 30 years ago better in some ways than of Ramadan last year. It's frightening.



This blessed month can't be left to become a blur in our memories. It has to be more than that time of the year we squeeze in fasting amongst the other things we do daily. One way to make the most of Ramadan is to plan beforehand.

Here are ten reasons why you should plan for Ramadan:

1. To be in Ramadan MODE: By planning for Ramadan before it arrives, you put your mind in "Ramadan mode". If you plan, you will mentally prepare for it, and it will empower you to see it as the special month it is outside of your regular routine the rest of the year. Just as you plan for going back-home for a visit...at least.

2. To Adjust Your Schedule: Plan family time, Iftar time at home, traveling time, shopping time (Eid Gifts)...By planning in advance, you can adjust your work, sleep and meal schedules in such a way as to make time for Suhur, Iftar, etc. That means, for instance, that if you normally go to bed at midnight, in Ramadan you would sleep earlier in order to get up early for Suhur. Or if you usually study late, you can instead sleep earlier and start studying after Suhur in the early morning hours. Planning in advance allows you the luxury to make time for the change in schedule that Ramadan brings. Thus, here is that you could do:

a) You can plan Ramadan family time

Is dinnertime usually an individual affair in your home, as opposed to a time the whole family eats together? Are Friday evenings the time every family member goes off to his/her own social activities? Planning in advance can change this at least in Ramadan.

Calling a family meeting about a month in advance, explaining the importance of Ramadan, its implications for the family and the need to eat Iftar together when possible as well as to attend Tarawih prayers, for example, will allow all family members to adjust their work and school

schedules accordingly. That will, Insha Allah, make Ramadan a blessing not just to every person in the family, but to the family as a whole.

b) To make a travel schedule

Do you know a fellow Muslim in your neighborhood who wants to get to the mosque for Tarawih every night but doesn't have a transportation? Or do you look at your work schedule and realize you have to work overtime near the end of Ramadan, so your family will miss out on Tarawih at the mosque the last ten nights of Ramadan? Planning in advance helps you work out your daily or weekly travel schedule to attend Tarawih prayers at the mosque, or even a trip for Iftar at a friend's place who may live farther away. Since you have the time before Ramadan begins, you can work this out with neighbors and friends.

c) You can plan "Iftar" at your home

You may have eaten fantastic Iftars at friends' homes last year. This year, open your doors. There is blessing in feeding a fasting person other than yourself and your family. Planning in advance gives you the luxury of calling friends over the month before and setting a date, so you can "grab" them before others get an opportunity to.

d) You can squeeze in Eid shopping

Planning in advance helps you think about all of those things you wanted to do in time for the end of Ramadan or Eid last year but couldn't. Maybe you wanted to go Eid shopping for gifts for family and friends in the last week of Ramadan but were too busy with the last ten nights of Ramadan. No problem! This year, you decide to go in the third week of Ramadan instead.

3. To Make the MENU:

While Ramadan may mean extra Ibadah to some of the brothers, it usually means extra cooking for most of the sisters. Ramadan's blessings are for men and women. Making a Ramadan menu for Iftar and meals, and working out when you want to invite relatives, neighbors and friends for Iftar will give sisters the opportunity to catch Tarawih

This Issue 'From The Minbar' presents:

⇒ **Planning for Ramadan: If We Fail to Plan; We Plan to Fail**

⇒ In next issue: **Benefits of Ramadan**

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and various other advantageous Ibadat instead of spending Ramadan's 29 or 30 days stuck in the kitchen. (And by the way, brothers, helping out with cooking or cleaning was a practice of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him; maybe this is a way you can increase your Sawab [rewards] this month).

4. Doing Khairat at high Thawab Times

Being generous is definitely an Islamic merit, but being generous in Ramadan is even more highly rewarded. Match Ibadat with specific times that carry more reward. Prepare to do I'tikaf, increase asking Allah for forgiveness in the last ten nights of Ramadan. Plan to give increased Sadaqa this month. Plan to visit that relative you may have not seen for months, if not years. Thinking about and arranging to do these things and finding other ways of gaining the pleasure of Allah in Ramadan will, Insha Allah, help you benefit more from it.

5. Plan Da'wah Activities During Ramadan

Some Muslims have gone to soup kitchens and made meals during Ramadan, while they were fasting. Not only will, Insha Allah, they be rewarded, but this is a great Dawah opportunity to explain what Ramadan and Islam are ALL about.

Planning in advance for such an activity gives you the time to call up a community Iftar in your area, explain what you want to do, and get your act together. You can also plan Eid open house for neighbors...

5 WAYS TO PREPARE FOR RAMADAN

1. Voluntary Fasts and Moderation in Eating

What better way of preparing ourselves to fast for 29 or 30 consecutive days in Ramadan than to fast the voluntary fasts.

Fasting Monday and Thursday: Abu Hurairah reported that the most the Prophet, (S) would fast would be Monday and Thursday. He was asked about that and he said: *"The deeds of people are presented to Allah on every Monday and Thursday. Allah forgives every Muslim except for those who are deserting each other." He says: "leave them for later".* (Ahmad)

Another is to fast the white days (13, 14 & the 15th of each Islamic month): Abu Tharr Al-Ghafari said: *"The Messenger of Allah (S) said "O Abu Tharr! If you fast three days of every month, then fast the 13th, the 14th and the 15th [these are call the al-ayyam al-beedh, the white days]".* (Ahmad, an-Nasa'i & Tirmithi)

2. Reciting Qur'an

Ramadan was the month in which the Qur'an was first revealed so it is the month of the Qur'an. We should devote much of this blessed month reciting the Qur'an.

Allah the exalted says: *"The month of Ramadan is the one in which the Quran was sent down, a guidance for mankind, clear proofs for the guidance, the Criterion; so whoever amongst you witnesses this month, let him fast it."* (Surah al-Baqarah 2:185)

We should set ourselves realistic targets for how much we should begin to recite each day for e.g. we will recite 1 or 2 pages a day, half a juz

(chapter), or 1 juz etc. We should recite however much we can manage and then build up gradually.

3. Praying Voluntary (Nafil) prayers

In Ramadan every voluntary prayer carries the reward of a Fard prayer in normal times and there is nothing more rewarding than a Fard prayer so one can imagine the immense rewards that are available in Ramadan for every voluntary prayer we pray.

The Prophet (S) said: *"Whoever draws near to Allah during it (Ramadan) with a single characteristic from the characteristics of (voluntary) goodness, he/she is like whoever performs an obligatory act in other times. And whoever performs an obligatory act during it, he/she is like whoever performed seventy obligatory acts in other times."* (Ibn Khuzaymah)

4. Sincere Repentance and Making Du'a

Ramadan is the month where we can gain mercy and forgiveness from Allah for all of our sins past and present. We should know that Allah is most merciful and most forgiving and loves to forgive. Many of us do not spend as much time as we should do in Du'a. Even if we do we rush our Du'a and our hearts and minds are not present whilst supplicating to Allah. Allah Almighty says in the Qur'an: *"When my servants ask you concerning me, (tell them) I am indeed close (to them). I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calls on me."*

5. Controlling the tongue and Improving character & manners:

Ramadan is a time where we must control our desires (nafs) as well as our tongues. Rasulallah (S) said: *"Fasting is not (abstaining) from eating and drinking only, but also from vain speech and foul language. If one of you is being cursed or annoyed, he should say: 'I am fasting, I am fasting.'" (Ibn Khuzaimah & Ibn Hibban)*

Rasulallah (S) said: *"Allah does not need the fast of one who does not abandon false speech or acting according to his false speech."* (Bukhari)

Rasulallah (S) said: *"There is none heavier in the scales of the Hereafter than good character."* (Tirmidhi & Abu Dawud).

5 GOALS FOR 2012 RAMADAN

1. Eat, drink and be moderate:

Let's try to stick to the Prophetic rule on eating. Al-Miqdam (r.a.) said: I heard the Messenger of Allah saying: *"No human ever filled a vessel worse than the stomach. Sufficient for any son of Adam are some morsels to keep his back straight. But if it must be, then one third for his food, one third for his drink and one third for his breath."* (Ahmad, Tirmidhi, An-Nasa'i, IbnMajah)

2. Memorize 1 new Surah each week of Ramadan:

Memorizing the Quran often seems like a daunting task. But the key is doing it in small bites. Since there are four weeks in Ramadan, try to memorize one new Surah a week. Start off with a short, easy one. Once you've started, you'll build momentum and may even want to memorize a longer one the following week.

3. Stop swearing and/or backbiting – with a special box:

It's hard not to shut our mouths off when someone upsets us. Whether we utter those indecent words or backbite about someone to our family and friends, we know this isn't the God-approved way of letting off steam. In Ramadan, when we want to build our spirituality, we've got to wage Jihad against our bad habits. Try this: get a box and every time you catch yourself swearing/getting angry or backbiting put some money in it. It could be a buck or less. The point is to choose an amount that makes it feel like punishment. At the end of the month send the money to a charity or buy a gift for the person whom you've backbitten the most against.

4. Go on a technology diet:

Even if you work in the IT industry, you can do this. Avoid checking personal email and surfing the web constantly during your fast. After Iftar, instead of plopping yourself in front of the screen, go to Tarawih. The same goes for the television. The point is to try to give our full attention to spiritual elevation this month.

5. Forgive everyone who has hurt you:

Still got a festering wound from the fight with your friend last year? Still upset about something your spouse said during a heated argument? Or are you still bitter about the way your parents sometimes treated you as a kid? Let go of the anger and pain this Ramadan and forgive those who have hurt you. Forgiving someone is not only good for the body, but it's also great for the soul.

And in Ramadan, ten days are devoted to Allah's forgiveness...shouldn't we human beings forgive too? If you find it very difficult to forgive everyone who gave you hard time, forgive at least three people.

CONCLUSION

Now when we know all of these facts, it is our obligation to plan and prepare for Ramadan so that we could achieve all the set GOALS in this blessed month.

AN ACTION ITEM

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