

## Introduction

The purpose of fasting is much more than just abstaining from food and drink, and the purpose of prayer is more than mere ritual. Improving one's conduct, learning self-discipline, and communing with Allah<sup>1</sup> (blessed and exalted is He) are quests that one must conscientiously pursue.

Prophet Muhammed (peace and blessings upon him) said, "Some people who fast get nothing from their fast except hunger and thirst, and some people who pray at night get nothing from it except lack of sleep."<sup>2</sup>

Writing about Ramadan was my way of getting more than hunger, thirst, and lack of sleep. Insh'Allah,<sup>3</sup> my writing will add a bit of adventure to the reader's Ramadan experience so that the pangs of fasting may be forgotten in a rhapsody of lyrics. For the non-Muslim reader, herein is a grand opportunity to visit Islam from inside the hearts of worshippers. Instead of merely reading *about* Islam, you are invited to participate in an Islamic escapade.

In a popular hadeeth,<sup>4</sup> it is said, "[Ramadan] is a month in which the beginning is for mercy, the core is for forgiveness, and the conclusion is for freedom from the fire."<sup>5</sup>

The first phase of the fasting experience brings salvation by grace. When a person conscientiously pursues righteousness, Allah's mercy will be granted to the believer just as he or she is. It is only by His grace and mercy that our sins are erased and we are spiritually revived.

When the conscious mind is in complete submission, the subconscious mind soon begins to follow. In the midst of fasting, the believer's sinful inclination becomes overwhelmed by Allah's dominion, and it is then that the believer begins to earn forgiveness and an assurance of salvation.

Finally, when the believer has truly submitted his or her whole self—mind, body, and soul—Ramadan helps to mold a believer into Allah's servant in every facet of life. The servant lives by the commandments of Allah (blessed!), witnesses for Allah in word and deed, becomes a responsible trustee of natural resources and synthetic

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<sup>1</sup> The Arabic word 'Allah' means 'the God' and is related to the Aramaic word 'Elah,' which was used by Jesus (peace upon him). The Hebrew word 'El' is also linked to the Aramaic and is most often used for 'God' in the Jewish Bible. The prolonged emphatic form of 'El' is 'Eloah.' Clearly, the three Abrahamic faiths use names of the same peaceful sound of 'ahhh.' It's tragic that we can't all get together on that same tune.

<sup>2</sup> Reported by Abu Hurayra and recorded by Darimi.

<sup>3</sup> 'Insh'Allah,' which means 'God willing,' is one of the most commonly used phrases among Muslims. We must not plan anything without acknowledging God's power to make or break a situation. As Mr. Wilson, in the Dennis the Menace cartoons, observed, "If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your future plans."

<sup>4</sup> A 'hadeeth' (also spelled 'hadith') is a teaching of Prophet Muhammed, which is not part of the Qur'an. The Arabic plural is ahadeeth, but, in English, it is commonly pluralized 'hadeeths,' although the entire collection is usually called 'the Hadeeth.' Included in the Hadeeth is the Sunnah, which contains examples from the Prophet's life and from that of the early Islamic community.

<sup>5</sup> Excerpt from an extensive hadeeth, narrated by Salman Farsi, reported by Ibn Khuzayma (Mishkat: Kitab al Saum). (Other versions reported by Ibn Abiddunya and Bayhaqi.)

blessings, and respects his or her own body (which rightfully belongs to Allah) by living a healthy, productive life. With such a full and active commitment to Allah (blessed!), the believer will earn Allah's favor and then be rewarded with the ultimate achievement, which is salvation from the fire of Hell and admittance into Heaven and the restored Paradise.

In each of my daily Ramadan devotions, I offer a taste-berry of Ramadan delights so that each Ramadan day will be flavored with a numinous spice. Ramadan is the Muslim's tent revival –the tent being the solitude and providence that enfolds each of us like a cloak. May your Ramadan adventure be one that nourishes you with the sustenance of Paradise and clothes you with the brilliant light of Allah's grace!

Day 1

## *Guidance*

O Believers, fasting is decreed for you as it was for those before you, so that you may fear and obey Allah.<sup>6</sup> You must fast for a number of days, but, if you are sick or traveling, you may make up missed days later. If you are able to fast but only with extreme difficulty, you may be excused from the fast by providing food for someone in need. But it is more advantageous to whoever freely gives more [fasting plus providing food for the poor]. If you only knew how good fasting is for you!

Ramadan is the month in which was revealed the Qur'an as guidance for Humanity and as evidence of that guidance and as a criterion [for distinguishing right from wrong]. Every available person should spend the month fasting, but a person who is sick or traveling may substitute other days. Allah wants to accommodate you and not make things difficult for you to complete the prescribed number of days for His glory because of His guidance; for that, you should be grateful.

*Inspired by<sup>7</sup> Al Baqarah (The Heifer) 2: 183-185*

*Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) said, "When the month of Ramadan comes, the gates of Paradise are opened, and the gates of Hell are locked and the devils are chained."<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>6</sup> The name 'Ramadan' is derived from an Arabic word associated with burning. In the process of intense and devoted prayer and fasting, the devotee burns away the energies of worldly concerns and then trusts God to reconstruct energies of reverence for Him and obedience to His will. Fearing God is to acknowledge His awesome power and to realize the importance of living in complete submission to Him. Ramadan gives the devotee the opportunity to burn vain energies and to change their composition into self-discipline and divine awareness so that the devotee may attain spiritual success.

<sup>7</sup> My Qur'anic renderings are based on intense research through seventeen different translations of the Qur'an. I use the words "inspired by..." to remind the reader that any translation cannot duplicate the Qur'anic Arabic with its goldmine of rich meanings. My goal was to reflect the elegance of the Qur'an in the mirror of my own passion for lovely English prose. To help readers unfamiliar with the style of the Qur'an, words in brackets are my additions for clarification or information; words in parentheses are substituted words, usually nouns replacing pronouns.

Chocolate bon-bons tempt us with a promise most luscious  
Of something wonderfully, scrumptiously delicious.  
With one bite of a bon-bon, the tongue is most welcoming  
To creamy filling with a cherry in its own juice floating.  
Ramadan is a confection –a numinous cherry  
Dipped in the Scripture that commands such piety.  
It is not until we taste it that we experience  
Ramadan’s surprise, a creamy center in its own bliss.

*Bism’Allah.<sup>9</sup> Alhamdulillah.<sup>10</sup>*

*O Allah, on this first day of Ramadan, be in my mind, in my body, and in my soul. Sustain me with your spiritual sustenance, and grant me strength, endurance, and peace of mind. Forgive me, purify me, and make my fasting acceptable to You.*

*Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy to all faithful Muslims engaging in this Ramadan adventure. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah<sup>11</sup> to exemplify healthy lifestyles so we may reflect Your glory better.*

*Subhan’Allah!<sup>12</sup> Amen.*

Day 2

## *Assurance*

When My servants ask you [Muhammed] about Me, I am indeed near. I listen to every prayer. May they also meditate and listen to Me and believe in Me so they may find proper direction.

On a night after fasting, you are permitted to be intimate with your spouses. Spouses are garments for one another.<sup>13</sup> Allah knows your past secret sins, but He has

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<sup>8</sup> Hadeeth: Muslim: reported by Abu Hurayra. When a person is intent in fasting, praying, and meditating, the positive energies that he or she emanates repel the evil forces and energies that abound in this life of struggle.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Bism’Allah’ means ‘In the name of God.’ A Muslim is supposed to commit every act and thought to God. The simple act of getting out of bed in the morning is to be committed to God. To pronounce “Bism’Allah” over every deed, thought, or intention has been referred to as “naming.”

<sup>10</sup> Most simply translated, ‘Alhamdulillah’ is ‘Praise God,’ but it means that all praises, honor, and glory are reserved for God.

<sup>11</sup> The word ‘ummah,’ which is Aramaic as well as Arabic, was translated into *ikklesia* in Greek and then to ‘church’ in English in the Christian New Testament. The Jewish Bible often translates it to ‘nation.’ In Islam, it means the ‘faith community’ and may refer to a local ummah or the global Ummah.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Subhan’Allah’ means ‘Glory to God!’

<sup>13</sup> The beautiful reference to spouses as garments means that each spouse covers the other with support, comfort, and encouragement. Spouses also protect one another from advances from strangers or others who would lead astray.

forgiven you, so now be intimate with your spouses, and seek what Allah has ordained for you [which is faithfulness in marriage].<sup>14</sup>

Eat and drink until the white thread of dawn [the band of morning light] appears distinct from its black thread [the awakening darkness], and then fast till night appears [at sunset], and do not associate with your spouses while you are in retreat in the mosques.

These are the regulations of Allah; do not break them. Allah clarifies His commands so people may fear and obey.

*Inspired by Al Baqarah (The Heifer) 2: 186-187*

*Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) said, "Fasting is a shield [from Satan]. A fasting person should avoid intimacy with his [or her] spouse and should not behave foolishly and impudently. If someone argues with or is abusive to him [or her], he [or she] should say twice, 'I am observing the fast.'"*

*The Prophet (peace upon him) added, "By Him in whose hands my soul rests, the smell from the mouth of a fasting person is better to Allah than the smell of musk.*

*"[Allah explains], 'He [or she] has left his [or her] food, drink, and desires for My sake. The fast is for Me, so I will reward the fasting person because of it.'"*<sup>15</sup>

Allah, make the white thread of dawn, within the Qur'an,  
Appear to my soul and help me rise to Your divine plan.  
Like the sun that swims, in its own rays, in a forward stroke,  
May I walk piously in my own life, not in darkness grope.  
Enslave me to rules in this world of obscurities,  
But free me to soar unfettered to numinous qualities.

*Bism'Allah. Alhamdulillah.*

*O Allah, on this second day of Ramadan, come closer to me, and bring me closer to You. Inscribe Your commands within my heart; write Your words upon my soul. Erase my sins, and cover their stains with Your grace.*

*Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy to every repentant sinner. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to exemplify the lifestyle of Prophet Muhammed (peace and blessings upon him) so that non-Muslims may see the value of living the Islamic lifestyle.*

*Subhan'Allah! Amen.*

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<sup>14</sup> The Prophet (peace!) told his followers that God would bless them for being intimate with their wives. They could not understand why sexual intimacy deserved to be rewarded. The Prophet explained, "If a man were to devote his passion to something forbidden [such as, the wife of another], then would that not be a sin? So, if he devoted his passion to something lawful, then he should have a reward" (Hadeeth: Muslim).

<sup>15</sup> Hadeeth: Bukhari: narrated by Abu Hurayra.