



In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Submitters Perspective

Monthly Bulletin of International
Community of Submitters

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Fasting: A Blessing in Disguise

Ramadan Information and Reflections

Ramadan is the month during which the Quran was revealed, providing guidance for the people, clear teachings, and the statute book... (2:185) We also understand that God revealed the Quran into Prophet Muhammad's memory in the Night of Power (17:1, 44:3, 97:1-5). It was then gradually released from his memory in accordance with God's will and written down by him with the help of Gabriel over a period of 23 years. Therefore Ramadan (also spelled as Ramadhan, Ramazan, so on) is a very special month for Muslims.

Be Thankful to God

The religious practices instituted by God, such as fasting, are not ordeals but rather great opportunities for us to develop our souls. They are blessings from God. If we can practice our religious duties the way we are supposed to, we get many benefits. Furthermore, these practices allow us to be more conscious of God in our lives. We know that "God never burdens any soul beyond its means..." (2:286)

and that "The remembrance of God is the most important objective..." (29:45).

Someone once said "We don't need more to be thankful for; we just need to be more thankful." How true! We have so much to be thankful for. Additionally, if we are thankful to God, He rewards us with more, as God has decreed that "The more you thank Me, the more I give you..." (14:7). Therefore, if we are appreciative, it is for our own good (31:12). God does not need any of our worship or any of us, but He is pleased for us if we make the right choice and decide to be appreciative (39:7).

No Hardship in Religion

Not only has God given us this great blessing of fasting in Ramadan, He is also compassionate in accommodating every kind of situation. For example, "if one is ill or traveling, an equal number of other days may be substituted. Those who can fast, but with great difficulty, may substitute feeding one poor person for each day of breaking the fast..." (2:184).

Of course, if one volunteers to do more righteous works, it is better. God wishes for us convenience, not hardship, that we may fulfill our obligations, and to glorify God for guiding us, and to express our appreciation (2:185).

God knows us better than we know ourselves. He is the One who created us. Even though He gives us alternatives to perform our responsibility when we are unable to fast, He emphasizes that if we can fast, it is best for us (2:184).

Benefits of Fasting

Besides nourishing our soul, the real self, fasting also has numerous, scientifically proven benefits for our physical health and the mental well-being. The time, length and nature of the fast all contribute to its overall positive effect. Fasting gives our digestive system a rest and improves our physical health. In his book "Fasting and Eating for Health," (ISBN 031218719X) Joel Fuhrman, M.D. notes that

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"The fast does not merely detoxify; it also breaks down superfluous tissue—fat, abnormal cells, atheromatous plaque, and tumors—and releases diseased tissues and their cellular products into the circulation for elimination. Toxic or unwanted materials circulate in our bloodstream and lymphatic tissues, and are deposited in and released from our fat stores and other tissues. An important element of fasting detoxification is mobilizing the toxins from their storage areas."

Month of Ramadan

A lunar month is approximately 29.5 days, which is the time it takes for the moon to orbit the earth. Because a lunar month is, on the average, one day shorter than a solar month, a lunar year is 10-12 days shorter than a solar year. Therefore, the Month of Ramadan comes 10-12 days earlier each year. This way we get to fast when the days are very warm and long in summer as well as when they are cool and short in winter. This beautiful design by God is also a test for us to see if we will fast regardless of the length or temperature of the days of Ramadan.

When is Ramadan?

Some Muslims believe that they must start and end the fasting month only after they can sight the moon physically, just like the old days. The Muslims during the time of Prophet Muhammad did not have the technological advantage we have today. They needed to see the crescent moon before they could start fasting.

God tells us that He rendered the sun and the moon as calculation devices (6:96, 10:5, 17:12, 55:5). We have the technology to determine precisely when the different phases of the moon will appear for any given month, now or in the future, according to the design of God. So we don't need physical sighting of the moon to decide when the month of Ramadan will start or end. We can easily verify it for ourselves using the resources available for us. God has given us the hearing, the

eyesight, and the brain, and we are responsible for using them (17:36).

What is an Islamic Day?

The Islamic day is the same as the Hebrew day. It begins at sunset and ends at the next sunset. In this system, the night comes before the day. Therefore, in some traditional Islamic countries, when they talk about, for instance, Friday night, they are in fact referring to Thursday night because that night actually belongs to Friday according to their definition of a day.

Ramadan 2008

The new moon times to be used for determining the beginning and ending of Ramadan are given below for UT (Universal time), also known as GMT (Greenwich Mean Time).

7:58 p.m. on August 30, 2008 (UT)
8:12 a.m. on September 29, 2008 (UT)

The actual time for each time zone is relative to UT. In order to calculate the Ramadan start date, compare the time of the New Moon with the Sunset in your location. If the new moon is before sunset, you should fast the next day, God willing.

Similarly to determine the last day of fasting, compare the time of the next New Moon with the sunset in your location. If the new moon is before sunset, the month of Ramadan is complete on that day. Otherwise one needs to fast the next day.

God willing Ramadan this year begins on August 31 and ends on September 29 for North, Central and South America. However Europe, Africa, Middle East, Asia, and Australia start on September 1. The Night of Destiny (Night of Power) will be on September 25, 2008 for the Americas, God willing. It will be one day later (September 26, 2008) for the rest of the world.

Happy and blessed Ramadan to all,
God willing.

Abdullah

Comments From A Submitter

Dear Brothers & Sisters

It gives me great pleasure by Allah's grace that I have become a submitter and ask forgiveness for the days of ignorance in which I lived in previously.

My story is long but I will try to be brief as possible.

I am a Malaysian but married a Pakistani girl due to family bloodlines. After living for nearly ten years with my wife in Malaysia I decided to migrate to Pakistan after the demise of my parents. My purpose for migrating was also to be with my Moslem brothers and sisters in Pakistan. Unfortunately after spending nearly four years in Pakistan I find the Moslems of this region are deeply steeped in rituals and traditions that have smeared the name of Islam.

Situation of the Moslems in this country is deteriorating as they have totally gone astray in their rituals and beliefs which they base on the men-made hadith.

I am a father of three children, two daughters and one son. I am still a Malaysian citizen along with two of my kids who were born in Malaysia. I am a gemstone merchant by profession and travel extensively.

I became aware of the Quranic miracle 19 when I was still in Malaysia. I did not take it seriously then but my research into this became serious after the 9/11 attacks.

After researching for nearly two years in Pakistan I realised the error that Moslems of the world are in.

My request is I truly very much need to be with community of submitters such as in Tucson as it is very difficult for me to cope with Islamic lifestyle of the Pakistanis.

If you can help me to migrate with my family to Tucson this will be the greatest gift that Allah can provide me as I need to be with community of submitters.

Your advise and cooperation in this matter is highly appreciated.

Thank you.

Brother S. K.

[Ed.'s note: Please submit your comments and views for us to publish so that you can share them with other readers]

2008 CONFERENCE REPORT

Surely, those who believe, those who are Jewish, the Christians, and the converts; anyone who (1) believes in GOD, and (2) believes in the Last Day, and (3) leads a righteous life, will receive their recompense from their Lord. They have nothing to fear, nor will they grieve.[2:62]

O you who believe, you shall be steadfast, you shall persevere, you shall be united, you shall observe GOD, that you may succeed.[3:200]

The 23rd annual United Submitters International conference was held in Tucson, August 1-3, 2008. God provided lovely weather to match the joyous mood of the more than 250 attendees. It's always so much fun to arrive at the hotel and see all the beautiful faces of submitters, smiling and hugging one another, rejoicing in another opportunity to be together in the worship of God alone. It was also exciting to see all the youths in attendance. Perhaps half of the submitters there were young folks (and of course, the rest of us are young at heart!).

Abdullah gave a wonderful khutba (sermon). With the Olympics coming up, he reminded us of how few athletes make it to the Olympics, and out of those few, only one in each event achieves the gold medal. A small number of winners, all the rest are losers. But in God's incredible system, we can all be winners. We may cross the finish line at different times, but if we are righteous, God rewards us all.

In his khutba, he told a story which reminds us to be careful how we interact with others. We know that we have the true message, but if we are arrogant, the truth might be lost.

Once upon a time there was a shepherd looking after his sheep on the side of a deserted road. Suddenly, a brand new Jeep Cherokee screeches to a halt next to him. The driver - a young man dressed in an Armani suit, leather shoes, Gucci sunglasses, Rolex wrist-watch and a tie - gets out and asks the shepherd, "If I guess how many sheep you have, will you give me one of them?"

The shepherd looks at the young man, then looks at the grazing sheep and replies, "Okay." The young man parks his car and connects his notebook to the Internet. He logs in to the NASA website, scans the ground using his GPS, opens a database and prints out a report on his portable printer. He turns to the shepherd and says, "You have 1586 sheep here." The shepherd answers, "That's correct, you may have your sheep."

The young man takes his animal and puts it in the back of his Jeep. The shepherd looks at the young man and says, "If I guess your profession, will you return the animal to me?"

"Yes, why not."

"You are a consultant."

"That's amazing, how did you know?"

"Very simple," answers the shepherd. "First, you come here without being called. Second, you charge me for something I already knew, and third, you don't understand anything about my business. Now can I have my dog back?"

Remember that patience and tolerance reflect a true strength of character and that the ugliest voice is the donkey's voice. We should give God's message to people without being arrogant and overbearing.

[16:125] You shall invite to the path of your Lord with wisdom and kind enlightenment, and debate with them in the best possible manner. Your Lord knows best who has strayed from His path, and He knows best who are the guided ones.

Abdullah then officially opened the conference (our Opening Ceremony) with a warm welcome to everyone who had come from near or far. He reminded us that we are like diamonds—rare, precious, and pure. Diamonds are hard and resistant to scratches. In fact, the only thing that can cut a diamond is another diamond. We must be careful not to cut each other. Tolerance and unity are important traits of believers.

We spent the rest of Friday getting to know one another with games from the Quran. We met many first time attendees and heard their stories of submission. We learned what various communities are doing to spread God's word. And we enjoyed zikr and recitation before bed.

Saturday and Sunday were spent benefiting from wonderful speeches. We heard from submitters young and old, new and seasoned. The talks were informative and inspirational, giving us new insight into the math miracle, the messengers, and all the things around us. We have so much to be appreciative of and thankful for.

After the noon prayer and the photo session on Sunday, way more than 100 people went to Masjid Tucson for a pizza/EEgee's party. We just weren't ready to say goodbye yet. It's always sad to deliver people to the airport for their trips home, but everyone leaves energized and strengthened for another year.

May God bless all the believing men and women, give us all health and happiness in the coming year, and allow us to join together in worship of Him alone next August.

Lydia

[Ed.'s note: God willing we are hoping to hold the next year's conference in Sacramento, California. We will provide more information as we have more details. Please join us by mail or email subscription and keep up with history in the making.]

MASJID TUCSON United Submitters International

PO Box 43476 Tucson AZ 85733-3476 USA

Tel/Fax: (520) 323 7636

internet web site www.masjiduntucson.org

e-mail: info@masjiduntucson.org masjiduntucson@gmail.com

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My First Ramadan: A Submitter's Reflections

Beyond knowing that God commands us to fast, during my first Ramadan as a Submitter, I didn't really understand why we fast all day. My initial understanding was that we should spend some time sympathizing with those less fortunate than ourselves. This is more an exercise of compassion rather than gratefulness. While compassion is valuable, however, an offshoot of being appreciative of our lives is having compassion for others.

Unlike our Contact Prayers and Obligatory Charity, very little is written in the Quran about Ramadan, but we take the ninth month of the lunar year to step back and celebrate the revealing of God's word by counting our blessings during the daylight hours. It is a perfect time to reflect on our traits as believers and use the time to prepare and better ourselves as submitters.

I know that I am not accustomed to functioning when my energy is low. Like most people, concentration and comprehension of complex ideas is particularly difficult when hungry and thirsty. Before knowing much about Islam, I knew a Muslim who took the whole month of Ramadan

off from work. Although sometimes we alter our everyday schedule, most of us have to continue life as usual. This is better for us, because we know that if we can make it through Ramadan each year, it will help us prepare for tests that may come in the future.

[2:155] We will surely test you through some fear, hunger, and loss of money, lives, and crops. Give good news to the steadfast.

This also gives us an opportunity to understand people who are less fortunate than ourselves. In general it's easy for us as humans to take for granted what God has given us. Day to day we forget how difficult life is for other people all around the world. Most of us submitters have access to safe drinking water and food everyday. For some of us, we are also much more appreciative of the sunset during this time. For me, the day begins to cool off, which is easy to appreciate after not drinking water during the day. In August in Tucson we often have temperatures over 100°F and I commute to school and work by bike.

Are we more appreciative of food and water after the sunset prayer during Ramadan? I am, but it now seems to me that Ramadan is a time to remind us to be appreciative the rest of the year. My understanding of Ramadan continues to evolve. I now see it as a continual training to focus on God's words in (2:172):

"O you who believe, eat from the good things we provided for you, and be thankful to GOD, if you do worship Him alone."

Also to strive for the traits of the righteous: *[3:17] They are steadfast, truthful, submitting, charitable, and meditators at dawn.*

Chris J.

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