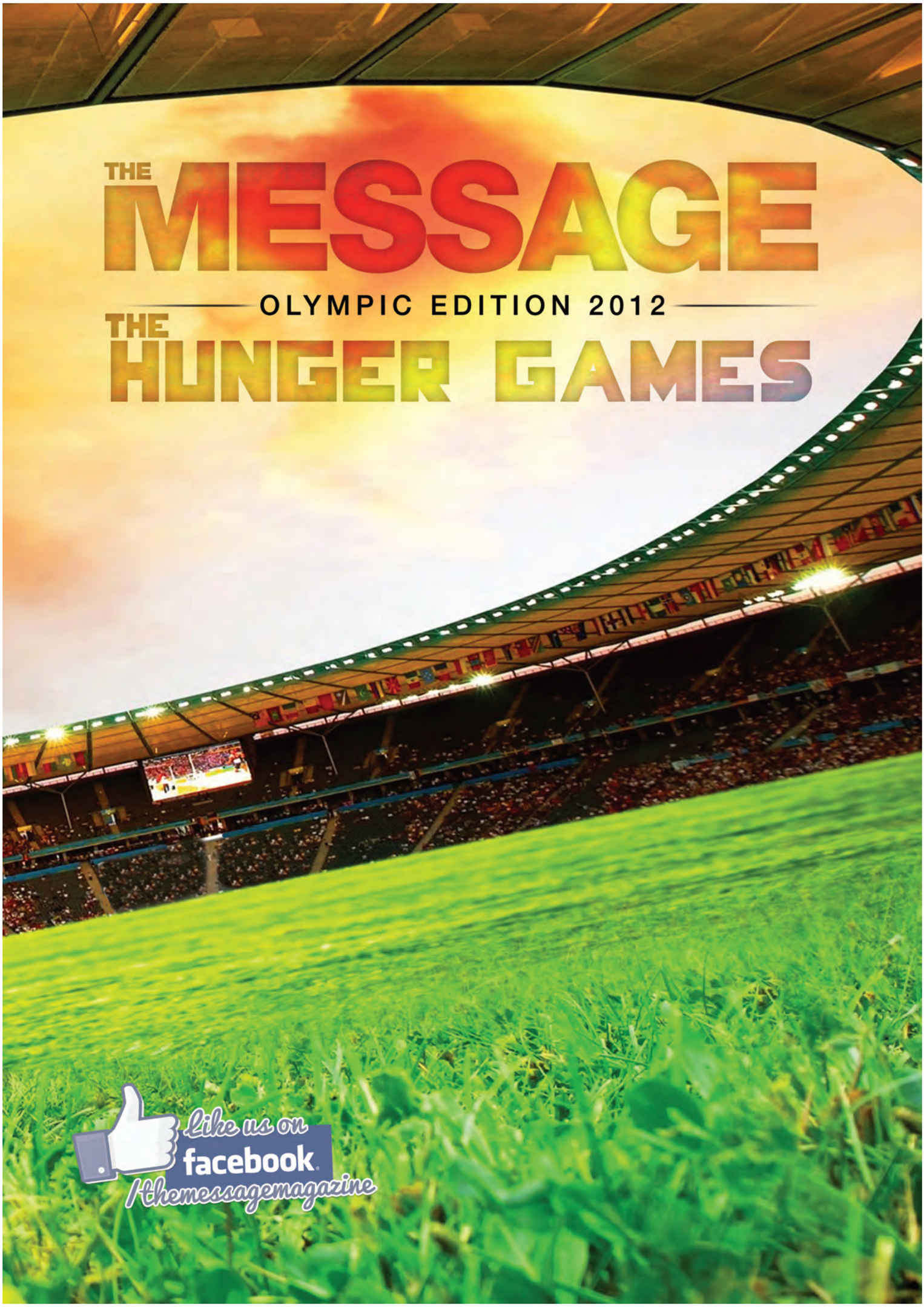
THE MESSAGE

OLYMPIC EDITION 2012

THE HUNGER GAMES



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THE HUNGER GAMES

OLYMPIC EDITION 2012

LET THE GAMES BEGIN:

Jeff Fenech (Australian boxing champion) once commented about his experiences at the Olympic Games where he pointed out, "It has been said that the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games is something that an athlete will remember for the rest of their life. It is true. That moment when you walk into the Olympic Stadium as part of the Australian Olympic Team, is a moment that I will never forget."

You can't help but get caught up with the euphoria and excitement of the Olympic Games when they come around. You drive past your local sport centre, park or tennis courts and you'll find everyone trying to get into 'the spirit of the games' by trying out sports that they have been inspired to play as a result of seeing them during the broadcast of the Games. You also see people's competitive nature coming out. Let's admit it, we all have day dreamt of winning an Olympic sport and standing on the podium to receive a medal in front of the TV cameras and screaming fans (or at least I have).

SubhanAllah, whenever I have a spare moment and watch the Olympics and high competitive nature of the games and how that has impacted on our lives and behaviours, I can't help but draw connections to Islam. As Allah (swt) says in the Quran: **'Race (compete) one with another in hastening towards Forgiveness from your Lord , and towards Paradise, the width whereof is as the width of heaven and earth...'** (57:21).

An Olympic swimmer may give up their regular diets, make huge lifestyle changes and then also spend up to 80 hours a week in the pool in order to shave a one hundredths off a second of their personal best times. We too might spend large amounts of time trying to compete with a friend or a work colleague in order to win 'bragging' rights over who makes more money, whose house has a larger land size, who has the latest model car or some other worldly matter.

Rather, let us race with one another these Olympics and beyond in what will earn us a podium finish with Allah (swt) in order to be rewarded with His forgiveness and a paradise as wide as the heavens and the earth – through the doing of good deeds. Ironically, the Olympic Games fall in the beautiful month of Ramadan this year. We should try, in healthy competition, to "out do" our family members and friends in the performing of prayers, the reading of the Quran, in our behaviour and character, in our generosity to others and in any other action that will make us closer of Allah. If we can't "out do" those around us in the doing of good deeds, let us at the very least try and better our own 'personal best times' by taking our actions of worship towards Allah (swt) to another level.

So over the coming weeks, let us truly reflect on our own Olympic games. Our games don't come around every four years, rather it's a lifetime commitment of trying to better ourselves in order to gain the ultimate goal of Allah's forgiveness and His paradise.

Your brother in Islam

Mohammed Adra

Mohammed Adra

THE 100 METRES MEN'S FINAL:

THE PROPHETS RAMADAN KHUTBAH

The climax of any Olympic Games is the 100 metres men's final that is usually held in the last few days of the Olympic schedule. Out of all the articles, books and websites written about the month of Ramadan, the Prophet's Ramadan Khutbah should be the pinnacle and climax of anything spoken or said about this beautiful month. However, unlike the 100 metres men's final that is held towards the end of the Olympics, due to its sheer importance, the Message Magazine committee has placed it as its opening article in the current issue.

It was narrated by Salman the Persian (may Allah be pleased with him) that, the Messenger of Allah (S) delivered a khutbah on the last day of Sha'ban (on the eve of Ramadan). The Prophet (S) said:

"O you people! A great and a blessed month has arrived for you. A month therein a night which is better than one thousand months The fasting during this month is an obligation (Fareedah), and the extra prayers during its nights are voluntary. Anyone who comes closer to Allah through a good deed during this month is as if he performed an obligatory duty (Fareedah) during times other than Ramadan, and he who fulfils an obligatory duty in it will be like one who fulfils seventy obligatory duties in another month. It is the month of patience, and, the reward of patience is Paradise. It is the month of visiting the poor, the sick and the needy so as to share their sorrows. It is the month where the nourishment, the sustenance and the income of the believing Muslim increase and they are blessed."

"Anyone who invites others to break their fast at Iftar will be provided with forgiveness of his sins and be saved from hell, and will receive rewards equal to the fasting person without reducing his own rewards in any respect."

Some of the followers of the Prophet (S) said: "Not all of us may find food to share with one so that he could break his fast." The Prophet (S) said: "Allah will reward you even if you help the fasting Muslim to break his fast with a date, a sip of water, or a drink of milk . . . it is a month: its beginning is Mercy (Rahmah), and its middle part is Forgiveness (Maghfirah) and its last part is freedom from hellfire. Anyone who helps a slave to be freed, Allah will forgive him and free him from Hell. Increase in yourselves four characteristics: two by which you will please your Lord and two others by which you cannot live without.

The first two qualities to please Allah are to bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah, and to ask forgiveness from Allah. However, the other two things that you cannot live without are: to ask Allah for Paradise, and to ask Him to protect you from Hellfire.

Anyone who gives water to a Muslim at Iftar, Allah will give him water during the Day of Judgment from the fountain of the Prophet Muhammad (S) which will make him not feel thirsty till he enters Paradise."

May Allah help us to live and follow this example so that Allah and His Messenger will be pleased with us all.

Ameen.

Your sister in Islam

Amel Saleh

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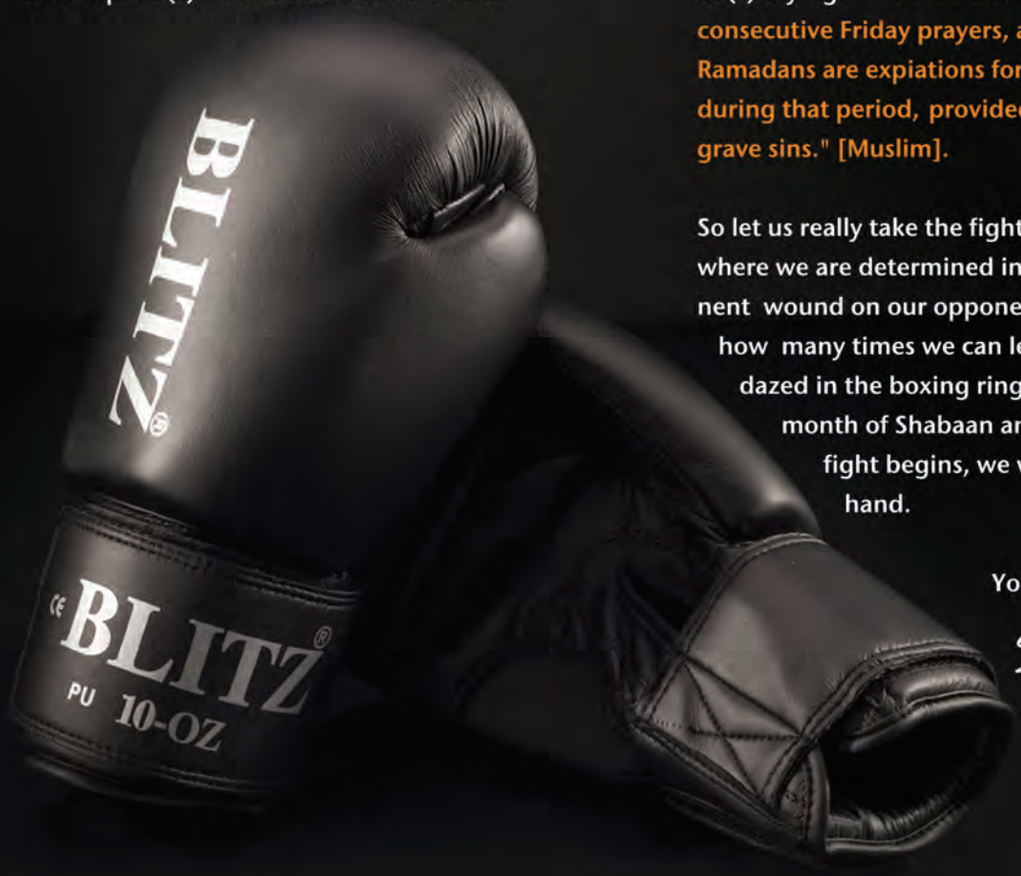
BOXING: THE TWELFTH ROUND

Since the creation of Adam, man has always been in a constant battle between the doing of good and evil. The months that make up the year can be best described as a twelve round boxing match where we end up going toe-to-toe with our arch enemy – Satan. Many of us who have faith and conviction in Allah (swt) might finish the first eleven rounds still feeling fresh and strong, others might be left battered and bruised while others may feel they are ready to 'throw in the towel' against this foe who is relentless in trying to take us away from the straight path.

You try and muster all the energy you have to stand up and face this opponent again in the twelfth round. You're tired and you're both physically and mentally exhausted. However, as the bell sounds for this final and decisive round you notice that your opponent is not coming out of their corner.

In fact they are chained and the referee informs you that round twelve is a bonus round for you where get to have a round of 'free punches' against your opponent. Well, out of His mercy, this is exactly the scenario Allah (swt) gives us during the month of Ramadan as the Prophet (s) was narrated to have said:



"When the first night of Ramadan comes, the Satan and the rebellious Jinn are chained, the doors of hell are closed and not one of them is opened (during the entire the month of Ramadan); the doors of Paradise are opened and not one of them is closed (during the entire month of Ramadan); and a crier calls, 'Those who desire what is good, come forward, and those who desire evil refrain from it', and many people are freed from Hell by Allah, and that happens every night." (Tirmidhi).

It is through this mercy that Allah (swt) provides the believer the opportunity to 'power up' again in order to recharge our spiritual batteries to prepare us to start a new twelve round battle in the following year. However, in order for us to gain the maximum amount from this 'power up' we need to make sure that we turn back to Allah (swt) in silent and verbal introspection within this blessed month. It is a month that Allah (swt) makes it easier for us to be 'rescued' from the things which provoke a person in the doing bad deeds.

This beautiful month serves as times to stop whatever it is we are doing in life and to reflect on our direction, whatever it may be. Abu Huraira (r) reported the Prophet (s) saying: "The time between the five prayers, two consecutive Friday prayers, and two consecutive Ramadans are expiations for all that has happened during that period, provided that one has avoided the grave sins." [Muslim].

So let us really take the fight to Satan this Ramadan where we are determined in wanting to leave a permanent wound on our opponent. Let's also try and see how many times we can leave Satan knocked out and dazed in the boxing ring so come the start of the month of Shabaan and the new twelve round fight begins, we will already have the upper hand.

Your brother in Islam

Sheikh Shady Al Suleiman

T30X: Taqwa in 30 days: Xtreme Sport Style

How to Get a Ramadan Full of Blessings

A month full of enormous spiritual wealth and reward, Ramadan is an incredible opportunity that we shouldn't lose out on. However, many of us often suffer from lack of productivity during Ramadan and not making the most of the special blessed month.

With the start of Ramadan, I have put together eight steps that will help us reap the benefits of the special month and allow us to experience a spiritual transformation this coming Ramadan Insha'Allah.

1. Be Prepared

The key to a productive Ramadan is to prepare for it well in advance. God encouraged us to fast and do extra good deeds during the months of Rajab and Sha`ban as a means of preparing ourselves for Ramadan. Rajab and Sha`ban can be considered the months of sowing, while Ramadan is the month of reaping. To really have a good harvest in Ramadan plant your seeds in those months; train your body to wake up one hour before fajr prayer, read more Qur'an during the day; fast on the preferred days, such as Mondays and Thursdays; and practice doing extra good deeds. By doing this, you will ease your way into Ramadan and performing those extra 'ibadat (acts of worship) during Ramadan will become very easy for you Insha'Allah.

If you haven't prepared for this Ramadan, make the intention to do it next Ramadan.

2. Be Realistic, Consistent

We usually enter Ramadan with very high aspirations and make promises to ourselves that we often can't keep due to the impracticality of our goals. If you haven't trained yourself before Ramadan for the 'ibadat you wish to carry out, you will most likely not be able to sustain them. Trying to finish the Qur'an three or four times during Ramadan when you barely read a page a day before Ramadan or wanting to pray tahajjud (extra night prayers) every single night when you've been struggling with waking up for fajr, will put too much physical and psychological pressure on you. This will most probably result in you slipping after the first week, losing hope and then giving up entirely. Prophet Muhammad (s), said: **"The best deeds are those which are consistent even if they are small."** (Al-Bukhari)

If you don't want to suffer from lack of consistency this Ramadan and end up feeling guilty about it, then be realistic in your expectations. Stick to a few `ibadat that you know you will be able to perform and be consistent with them. For example, if you decide to complete the Qur'an only once during the month and pray only two rak`aat (units) tahajjud (late night prayers) every night, and actually sustain this throughout the entire month, it will be much greater in the eyes of Allah than if you put pressure on yourself to do more `ibadat than you can handle and then find you cannot follow through with them.

3. Don't Eat too Much at Iftar

Ramadan is a month of cleansing — cleansing of our souls and body. Fasting allows us to feel a little of the hunger pangs that poor people feel; and gives our overworked digestive system a break from continuous digestion. Unfortunately, it has become very common for Muslims to eat so much food at iftar time and late into the night that they often find that they have gained weight by the end of the month. If you think about it, gaining weight defies the whole purpose of fasting. Instead of detoxing, we end up toxing; and instead of feeling hungry, we end up waking up the next morning feeling bloated and uncomfortable.

The mistake a lot of Muslims often fall into during Ramadan is making so many different kinds of foods and eating them. While the delicious, unhealthy fried food may be very tempting after a long day of fasting, it will just makes us lazy, sleepy and will most definitely result in an unproductive night. We may even be too tired to pray tarawih after a heavy meal.

If you're smart with what you eat at iftar and follow the Sunnah of the Prophet (s), by filling only a third of your stomach with food, a third with water and allowing a third for air, you'll immediately notice a difference in your energy level while fasting and after you break your fast Insha'Allah.

4. One Hour before Fajr

The secret to a productive day is taking advantage of the times that God put barakah (blessing) in. Prophet Muhammad (s) taught us that there is barakah in the early hours of the morning. By spending the hour before fajr in prayer, recitation of Qur'an and in the remembrance of Allah, you will get the spiritual nourishment your body requires for that day. Just like we need to eat breakfast every morning to give us energy, the spiritual nourishment our body needs is equally important.

Without it, we will not have much barakah in our time and we will find ourselves getting tired easily and not being very productive.

Additionally, having suhoor (pre-dawn meal) gives us barakah. The Prophet said: **'Have suhoor, for in suhoor there is barakah.'** (Al-Bukhari).

Make sure you wake up every morning before fajr, pray at least two rak`aat, make some du'as' (supplication), read a bit of Qur'an, and have a bite to eat (even if it's just a few dates). If you try this, I guarantee you, with Allah's will, that one hour in which you deprive yourself of sleep for Allah's sake will grant you so much barakah that day. You'll find that you will finish your work early and still have plenty of time on your hands for your `ibadat.

5. Prepare for Eid Early

It isn't by coincidence that the last ten days of Ramadan are the most blessed and contain the most reward. Allah purposely chose these days to be the most rewarding to test us because He knew that very few people will be able to maintain or increase their amount of worship towards the end of Ramadan. As Ramadan comes to an end, not only do we become tired physically (from continuous fasting), but we are also preparing for Eid – making Eid sweets, buying Eid clothes and even doing Eid cleaning.

Therefore, we find ourselves struggling on those last ten days trying to finish our Eid preparations that we end up not having much time for our `ibadat. This is why it is extremely important to prepare for Eid early if you don't want to miss out on the treasures of the blessed last ten nights.

The last thing you want to be doing on the 27th or 29th night of Ramadan, which are considered two of the most blessed nights of the month and contain a tremendous amount of reward, is spending your time at a shopping centre frantically trying to find a pair of shoes to match your Eid outfit or making those last minute Eid sweets. If you prepare for Eid early (preferably even before Ramadan), you will be able to utilise your time in those last ten days in prayer, recitation of Qur'an, remembrance of Allah and doing good deeds.

6. Du'as for Others

We often get excited before Ramadan as we know that the time Allah will Insha'Allah answer our prayers is just around the corner. Some of us even memorise special du'as and prepare du'as' lists well in advance.

This is a wonderful thing to do of course, but if we want to increase the effectiveness of our du'as, we should make du'as for others. The Prophet (s) said:

'Whenever you make a supplication for another believer and he is not present, an angel will say 'and same to you.' (Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi).

When we make du'as for our brother or sister in Islam, we are basically hitting two birds with one stone – praying for others and ourselves.

Due to the difficult time the Islamic ummah (community) is going through at the moment, let's all plan to make a great deal of du'as this Ramadan for our brothers and sisters who are suffering in Libya, Syria, Palestine, Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan and all the other Muslim countries. Choose times in which du'as are answered, such as the last third of the night and when you break your fast, to make the du'as with all sincerity and a wakeful heart.

May Allah answer all our prayers this Ramadan. Amen.

7. An Opportunity to Purification

Fasting is not only about abstaining from food and drink but it is also about abstaining from anger, backbiting, jealousy, greed, thinking ill of people; and all the other diseases of the heart. Purification of the soul from the illnesses of the heart is not an easy task and the person who is able to free

him/herself from these unhealthy qualities is truly the successful one: **"And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it; And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and righteousness, he has succeeded who purifies it."** (Ash-Shams, 91:7-9)

We all suffer from the constant annoying whispers of the Satan (devil) that just won't go away, thus making the task of purification even more difficult. For this, the blessed month of Ramadan is an ideal time to work on purifying our souls.

Not only does God lock away all those evil devils during the entire month; but fasting in itself is a form of purification. Fasting softens our hearts, weakens our human desires and instills in us the pleasant qualities of patience and will-power. Unlike the normal days of the year, we feel more inclined to do righteous deeds and to keep away from committing sins. This Ramadan, let us all choose one unwanted quality about ourselves that we wish to change and make a conscious effort to purify ourselves of it.

Ramadan comes once a year, and when it leaves us we don't know if we will live to see the next one, so let us strive to make the most of this Ramadan. May Allah grant us all a Ramadan full of barakah and blessings. Ameen.

Your sister in Islam

Jouhaynah Khodr

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In the Members Box with Sheikh Aref:

8 Frequently Asked Questions

The Message Magazine consulted Sheikh Aref Chaker to answer some of the frequently asked questions about the fasting month of Ramadan.

Below are the questions and answers he has given. (Please note that Imams do differ on some of the answers).

Question 1: What is the ruling of swallowing saliva and Mucus while fasting?

In relation to swallowing one's own saliva it is permissible and there is no issue with it. Imam Al Nawawi states, " that whatever a person cannot avoid or stop such as swallowing one's saliva will not break the fast because stopping such an action is cumbersome and of extreme difficulty".

In relation to swallowing Mucus, the scholars differed about it on two opinions:

a - The Hanbali and Shafi'ee view which says that if it is swallowed deliberately after it reaches the mouth then it does nullify one's fasting.

b - The Hanafi view which says that it doesn't whether it reaches the mouth or not.

c - All scholars agree that it is pardoned if it is done by mistake or unintentionally.

All opinions are respected and the adherents of a specific madhab are to follow the relevant one. In general, one may say that if the person is capable of getting rid of it confidently then the first opinion is the one that suits him. However, if someone is young or does not know how to get rid of mucus then the latter opinion is more appropriate to this person.

Question 2: What is the ruling concerning the use of eye drops?

The scholars differed in the ruling of the use of eye drops while fasting on two main opinions:

1 - The Malikis and Hanablis believe that it breaks the fast if it reaches the throat because the eye does lead to the throat.

2 - The Hanafis in one of their views and Ibn Taymiyah suggest that the use of eye drops does not nullify the fasting.

However, they recommended that one delays the use of eye drops to night time unless there is a need and advised that if one finds the taste of the eye drops in his mouth to spit it out and not swallow it.

Question 3: Is swimming permissible while fasting?

Swimming as a sport is permissible and recommended because it is very beneficial to the fitness and well-being of a Muslim. However while fasting, swimming becomes prohibited if the water reaches the throat and in-turn the stomach.

The Prophet (s) prohibited the person from being excessive in inhaling water through the nose while fasting. In the hadith of Abu Dawood, the Prophet (s) says, **"inhale thoroughly unless you are fasting".**

The Prophet (s) advised the Muslims not to inhale all the way up the nose while fasting despite the fact that it is a highly recommended act of worship according to some Madhaahib and compulsory according to others. Therefore, an action such as swimming, which is not obligatory, could be delayed to night time.

Question 4: Is one allowed to wake up in a janaaba (major impurity) state and shower while fasting?

Yes, one is allowed to wake up in a janabah state and shower while fasting because the Prophet (s) personally woke up in a state of janabah and showered while he was fasting. Our mothers Aisha and Umm Salamah report the hadith which is found in Bukahri and Muslim that the Prophet (s) used to wake up during a day of Ramadan while being in a Janaaba state, then he would perform Ghusl (shower) and continue fasting. It should be noted that the Prophet (s) would wake up for the fajr salah, shower and then lead the Jama'ah.

Question 5: What is the ruling of bleeding and swallowing blood while fasting?

Blood from the mouth is a fluid that has a ruling different than saliva. The Hanbali's, Shafiees and the Malikis have one opinion in regard to bleeding which is that one should

on Ramadan

spit it and not swallow blood. If one does then their fasting is nullified and they need to make up another day.

Ibn Qudamah says "that if one bleeds from his mouth and he swallows then it will nullify his fast even if it is a small amount because the mouth has the same ruling as what enters the throat from outside the body".

The Hanafis agreed with the scholars but they factored the amount of blood in and said that if it overwhelms the saliva and swallowed then it breaks the fast and if it is overwhelmed by the saliva then it does not.

Question 6: Is Zakat Al Fitr similar to the general Zakat that is one of the five pillars of Islam?

Zakat Al Fitr is different than the general Zakah that is part of the five pillars of Islam.

Zakat Al Fitr is a chartity that a Muslim has to pay during the month of Ramadan for the purpose of complementing the fasting and purifying from the faults that one makes during fasting. Abdullah Ibn Abbas clarifies us the purpose of Zakat Al Fitr and says, **"The messenger of Allah prescribed Zakat Al Fitr as a purification for the fasting from flaws and foul language and a source of food for the destitute. Whoever pays it before the salaah of Eid, it is accepted from him and whoever pays it after it is treated like any other charity"** (Abu Dawood).

The hadith of Abdullah Ibn Umar clarifies its amount and on whom it is compulsory. He says that the Messenger of Allah (s) said, **"the messenger of Allah prescribed Zakat Al Fitr; its amount is a Saa' from dates, or a Saa' from barley. It is compulsory on the free and the slave, on the male and the female, on the young and the elderly of the Muslims. He commanded that it is to be paid before the salaah of the Eid "** (Sahih Bukhaari).

Saa' is approximately two kilos and a half. Thus, it is compulsory on all the Muslims in a household whether they are fasting or not and regardless of their age or gender.

Question 7: What is the ruling of having a menstrual blood disappear or appear during the day of Ramadan?

In the first instance, the sister would have begun the day without the intention of fasting before fajr and as a result this is a day that she will have to make up even if she fasted on her own accord.

In the second instance, the lady's fasting will be nullified because of the appearance of the menstrual blood and she will have to make up the day. Ibn Qudamah says, **"And once the menstrual blood is found during any part of the day either the beginning or the end, the fasting is nullified".**

Nevertheless you are rewarded for the intention of fasting, Inshallah.

Question 8: What happens if my menstrual blood stops a short time before the adhan of Fajr do I have to fast?

Yes, if the menstrual blood stops before the adhan of Fajr then the sister should fast that day. She needs to intend to fast that day before the adhan of Fajr. Ghusl from the menstrual cycle is not a prerequisite for the soundness of the fasting. As Ibn Qudamah describes, her ruling is similar to the ruling of the person who is a junub.

We hope Sheikh Aref Chaker has cleared some confusion about these frequently discussed topics and we thank him for his time.

Happy Fasting!

TAEKWONDO:
10 EFFECTIVE TIPS FOR CONTROLLING YOUR TONGUE IN RAMADAN

In ancient times, Taekwondo used to be taught for the purpose of self-defence. Its training generally included a combination of blocks, kicks, punches, open-handed strikes and various take-downs. Teachers of the sport warn that if not taught for its sole purpose of self-defense, it can cause quite a lot of harm. In other words, a person who practices Taekwondo needs to learn to have a lot of patience and self-restraint in order to use their strength for good.

So what do our tongues have to do with Taekwondo being an Olympic sport? Well firstly, if used correctly our tongues possess a lot of power. However, like Taekwondo, we need to know how to use it and when to restrain it. Many ahadith of Prophet Muhammad (s) have warned us against letting the tongue be free, yet we still find amongst us many struggling to leave back-biting, slander, swearing, cursing, lying and all those traits which are not befitting for the character of a Muslim.

Here are some tips to control your tongue and gain the most of your fasting, as the Prophet (s) said: **"Whoever does not give up forged speech and evil actions, Allah is not in need of his leaving his food and drink (ie. Allah will not accept his fasting.)"** [Bukhari].

1. LEAVE THAT WHICH DOES NOT CONCERN YOU

The first tip to master is to leave that which does not concern you. Don't enquire about something that is not necessary like what someone else may have said or done wrong.

The Prophet (s) said: **"From the excellence of a man's Islam is leaving that which does not concern him."** [Bukhari].

2. REMEMBER 'SILENCE IS GOLDEN'

Before you speak, start by asking yourself a few questions: 1. Will this benefit or harm? 2. Is it necessary? Often it takes this mere moment of reflection to identify whether your speaking is necessary or useless. And as the proverb goes: **'If talk is silver then silence is gold'.**

You can write this and hang it up on your desktop at work!

3. CONCEAL FAULTS OF OTHERS

Covering the faults of others is part of the virtue of safeguarding the honour of Muslims. Once the Prophet (s) was asked: **"O Messenger of Allah, which of the Muslims is best?" And he said, "He who the Muslims are safe from his tongue and his hand."** [Riyadh as-Saliheen].

We're quick to disclose others' faults and conceal our own, yet we should remind ourselves of the time when we would wish our faults would be concealed. The Prophet (s) said: **"Whoever conceals (the fault of) a Muslim, Allah will conceal his fault on the day of Judgment."** [Muslim]

Our society is filled with many rumours that create disunity as well as animosity so always presume good of others and be part of the solution.

4. ELIMINATE UNPRODUCTIVE 'CHIT-CHAT'

We are all culprits of talking rubbish at times, yet as Muslims we know that Allah is always listening to us. Ask yourself what topics often come up in your conversation? Are they about matters which would be pleasing to Allah? Or are they just about worldly matters and boastfulness?

We have to ensure it is not always the latter, instead discuss topics that are beneficial. It may be social awareness, about a hadith you have learned, about Muslims who need help. Often I plan mentally in advance what I may say to someone new I am meeting, or consider topic areas of interest we may discuss at gatherings.

5. A SLIP OF THE TONGUE?

Our societies are fragmented and our families sadly 'not on talking terms' because someone said something without thinking or in a heated moment. We know from the narration of the Prophet (s) it is prohibited to stop talking to one who has displeased us for more than three days; yet some Muslims go years on end without talking to relatives/family members despite the curse incurred as a result of cutting off such relationships. Often it occurs on the basis of what can be a 'slip of the tongue' – so take it upon yourself to say sorry if you wronged someone or forgive them if it was a slip of the tongue.

6. Don't spend your 'free minutes' on talk

Our social culture and major mobile corporation networks tell us that conversing is 'free' so we should take advantage of it – but every minute comes at a big price to your deen, dunya and akhirah. Check that what you're going to say is beneficial and the time spent on talking is reasonable otherwise you just fall into the trap of talking without any meaningful purpose.

Cut out your talking time after iftaar and whilst your fasting and don't let a minute be wasted. Instead, use those minutes to see how your family are, call to speak to those who you have not been in touch with for a while and get in touch with others to invite them to good. Allah (swt) says in Surah Al-Asr: **'Verily by time, man is in loss, except for those who believe and do righteous deeds, and recommend one another to the truth, and recommend one another to patience'** [103: 1-4].

7. Sponsored silence

We all know a friend or two who has the 'gift of the gab' as they say, or you might be thinking "that's me!" – try a sponsored silence day this Ramadan! Where you don't talk to anyone from dawn to sunset unless absolutely necessary (Facebook barred too!). You can raise money for a cause and learn a new trick (how not to talk) which can help you to reflect on exactly how useful silence is. Indeed the prophetic teachings tell us that we should remain silent especially if we do not have anything good to say: **"Anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day, should speak good words or be silent"** [An-Nawawi].

8. Replace the bad with good

One way to atone for any slandering/lying/backbiting is identifying who you spoke about wrongly, and either seek their forgiveness this Ramadan (or if this will cause more animosity), mention them well and praise them in the same circles of people you use to slander/lie/back-bite them in.

9. Mention the name of Allah (Subahanahu Wa Ta'la)

Make it your habit to make mention of Allah (Subahanahu Wa Ta'la) in your conversations. Without this there is little protection from falling into the traps of shaytan and us losing control of our tongues. Every word we say will be held to account, and as Ibn Qayyum Al Jawziyyah says: "**Every gulp of air that goes out in a cause other than the cause of Allah (swt) will turn to sorrow and regret on the Day of Judgement."** Don't let your speech be the source of regret in the Hereafter and as the hadith says: **"Make your tongue moist with remembrance of Allah".**

10. Seek protection from the hellfire

As mentioned at the beginning of this series, our tongues are the cause of our destruction or our salvation, so protect yourself from saying that which is wrong. Allah's Messenger (s) said, **"Do you know the thing which most commonly brings people into Paradise? It is fear of Allah and good character. Do you know what most commonly brings people into Hell? It is the two hollow things: the mouth and the private parts."** [Bukhari]

I hope the above 10 ways – which are by no means the only methods of controlling one's tongue – are of benefit. There are many other tips and tools you can come up with too. Let us know by posting your comments on messagemagazine.com.au if you have any other tips for controlling the tongue this Ramadan and beyond!

by ProductiveMuslim.com

MARATHON: HAJJ: JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME

No matter how many courses you attend, or lectures you hear, or videos you watch, nothing can really prepare you for the spiritual roller coaster that awaits you as you embark on your journey to fulfill the 5th pillar of Islam – Hajj.

There are many powerful experiences to share, but here are a few which really stood out to me.

An automatic tranquility descended upon us from the moment we arrived in Madinah. Being able to visit the mosque of the Prophet (s) whenever you want was truly a privilege I will never forget, as was visiting the Prophet's (s) tomb and that of the two greatest companions buried alongside him, Abu Bakr as-Siddiq (r) and Umar ibn al-Khattab (r), reflecting on the struggles they endured for the sake of Islam and questioning our own contribution to this Deen. Next to them is the Rawdah, which the Prophet (s) declared to be a garden from Paradise. Needless to say it was quite an adventure getting to either of these two parts of the mosque, but it is well worth the wait.

As part of our stay in Madinah we visited several sites of interest; among these was the Mountain of Uhud.

The Sheikh ensured that significance of this landmark did not escape us – the lesson will be with Muslims until the end of days – that if we do not follow the guidance of Muhammad (s) we cannot expect a result other than failure.

From Madinah we travel to Mecca. The ihraam clothing that the men wear is a powerful symbol. It is more than just the simple two pieces of un-fitted cloth; rather it is a state of mind, an affirmation of complete devotion, humility, and ultimate submission to Allah.

And yes, you cannot help but draw parallels to the kafan (burial shroud) in which we will leave this dunya. We arrive in Mecca (400km later), and almost instantaneously you feel the magnetism of the ka'ba, without even seeing it. It is an amazing and awe inspiring sensation as we enter the grand mosque.

There are literally hundreds of thousands of people everywhere you look, yet somehow it feels strangely like you have the place all to yourself. The noise of the pilgrims becomes a faint murmur as we approach the centre of the mosque's courtyard.

To capture the moment, the guides ask you to look down as you walk with them, and only raise your head once they tell you; and as the ka'ba comes within close distance and you raise your head, an indescribable mix of emotions envelop you.

Some people cry, some people smile, and some people just gaze at it in utter disbelief that we are finally there. I remember once reading on a picture of the ka'ba: "Vision cannot encompass this beautiful sight. Each glance returns with greater delight!" How true it is.

The rituals of Hajj itself span only five days, and the morning of the 9th of Dhul Hijjah is the main event, the day we have been waiting for and the whole basis of Hajj, as the Prophet (s) said **"Hajj is Arafah".** We spend our day supplicating to Allah in true humility and recognition that we are but slaves to the Almighty. Maghrib approaches, the sun descends towards the horizon, and as it disappears you can't help but feel a sense of accomplishment – insha Allah you are now as the Prophet (s) described – pure as the day your mother gave birth to you.

Sleeping in Muzdalifah

Cutting Hair

With the day of Arafah practically complete, we head off to Muzdalifah. This is literally a barren plane with absolutely no facilities to speak of (apart from bathrooms) – no tent, no carpet, no mattress, nor pillow – just you, the sky, the ground, and only four million other pilgrims.

Ka'ba up close & personal

Prophets (pbuh) Mosque

This is the most profound lesson I learnt on my Hajj trip. When you arrive in Hajj you usually start off with five star accommodation, accommodation closer to the actual days of Hajj, then one star in Mina, half star in Arafah and finally 1 million (real) stars in Muzdalifah.

From the beginning to the end, your attachment to dunya is systematically stripped away from you, until you end up sleeping on the dusty ground and you are happier and more content than when you were sleeping in a five star hotel. This is truly a rehabilitation of the nafs, and a reminder of your place in the dominion of your Creator. I found this lesson to be the essence of Hajj.

As a final act of worship before we leave Mecca we perform the farewell tawaaf, and like millions of our predecessors, bid farewell to the first house dedicated to Allah, rejoicing at this great favour bestowed upon us, praising Allah for allowing us to have visited these magnificent sanctuaries, asking Him to grant that this visit should not be our last, and that we will be of those whose pilgrimage is accepted.

Ameen

Your brother in Islam

*Mazen Abou-Zolof**

** Mazen was part of the Zamzam Hajj Group who performed the pilgrimage to Mecca in 2011. For more information regarding this year's Hajj package and program with Zamzam, please visit www.hajj.com.au or contact 0406 926 926.*

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The Spirit of the Games:

OTHERS THIS RAMADAN

We've focused on ourselves mostly up till now.

How can I get the most of Ramadan?
How can I get ready for such an auspicious occasion?
But is Ramadan only about the self?

In a way, it's only about the self. And yet, strangely, in order for it to truly be about just you, it has to include others.

In Sahih Bukhari, it is narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: **"And whoever was at the need of his brother, Allah will Be there for his need. And whoever relieves a difficulty from a Muslim, Allah Relieves from him difficulty of the difficulties of the resurrection, and whoever hides the faults of a Muslim, Allah will Hide his faults in the resurrection"** (Al-Bukhari).

HOW BEAUTIFUL. MERCIFUL. INSPIRATIONAL.

You'll notice how the prophet (peace be upon him) uses the past tense. This is an Arabic linguistic technique to indicate the strength of action, like saying **"that you could do something with your eyes closed".**

It also indicates that you should not be so distant from your brother that you need to start helping him, rather, that you are already there and the Prophet (peace be upon him) is merely showing you the magnitude of what you are already doing.

It is narrated that the Prophet (s) said: **"Indeed Allah, half way in the month of Sha'ban looks at his creation and he forgives them all – except a mushrik (polytheist) and one that carries negativity towards others".**

May Allah purify our creed and our hearts. The one who's creed is correct and yet he hates or loathes others – Allah will not forgive him as per this hadith.

In a famous incident, as Ibn Abbas was leaving i'tikaf, he was asked: **"How can you leave i'tikaf?"**

He replied that **he had heard the messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) say that helping a brother in need was better than 10 years of i'tikaf in the prophet's mosque (in another narration, 2 months).**

It seems that everyone's aspirations for Ramadan is to be able to go on Ummrah and pray at the haram. There's nothing wrong with that. But few people realize that so many of our brothers and sisters around the world are dying and you could easily feed a village with the money of a ticket to Ummrah.

Each and every one
of those people is better for you than
1,000 months of i'tikaf at the prophet's mosque!

Your brother in Islam
Abdel-Rehman Mussa

ARCHERY: How to Teach Kids Ramadan Isn't Just About Eating:

Training children to Fast

In the Olympic sport of archery, the archer is always striving to target and hit that elusive bull's eye. Their sport is truly an art that involves practice, skill and determination. Like archery, parenting can also be seen as an art where applying the right strategies can result in achievements of mammoth proportions when it comes to families. Keeping this in mind, I have decided to make the bull's eye our kids and target the raising of specific Islamic values within our children the focus in the following article.

My oldest daughter is getting to the age where she is starting to understand the world around her. Part of that understanding is asking the question 'why' to nearly everything. Take last Ramadan for instance, she asked 'Why do we fast the month of Ramadan?' I remember tripping over my words in trying to explain the reasons. A year of reflection has since past and I have been able to write down how to best teach kids that Ramadan isn't just about not eating.

Ramadan is always a very special time for Muslims all over the globe. It's a time for closeness to our creator, spiritual healing, asking for forgiveness and seeking Allah's content with us. But sometimes we don't really know how to make our children feel that uniqueness about the holy month and some other times it is even difficult to make them accept the rituals of Ramadan and understand the real meaning behind it.

To begin with, it is important for children to understand what Ramadan is all about and how it fits into the overall life of a Muslim. That's why parents should sit with their children and have a talk about Ramadan.

1. Choose a relaxed time with your child before Ramadan and introduce Ramadan so that he can understand. Think of a friend or family member who is dear to your child's heart. Ask him how he would feel if this person came to visit you for a short while with all the presents and sweets he or she brings along. Would this visit make him happy? why? Link this to the arrival of the holy month, which comes only once a year with a lot of sweets too, this time from Allah Most High.

2. Prepare a simple action plan to plan together for the arrival of the dear guest. How would you plan for your guest? Put the action plan together for preparing the house and yourselves for the arrival of the holy month.

3. Talking to your child about the doors of Paradise being open in this holy month is highly recommended. You can even make a tour every night into Paradise and take a closer look at what Allah Most High has prepared for those who obey him in this holy month.

4. Remember also to Help the children make the most of Ramadan by getting them excited about the fasting and the breaking of the fast.

5. Take the children with you to the masjid (depending on your masjid policy and your child's age).

6. Get your children to help prepare the suhur and iftar meals.

7. Get them to give to charity so that they realise all of the blessings of Ramadan. Teach the kids to make dua. Let them know they can ask for anything they want. Teach them to ask for things for others as well as for themselves.

RAMADAN IN THE WEST

Ramadan for children in non-Muslim countries can be a challenge. Children in general have a natural need to belong, to belong to a family, a school or to a group of friends.

To be able to fit in and belong in a certain place or to a certain group, one feels one has to be the same, the same in attitudes, in habits, etc. During Ramadan, children cannot help but be different and this can be difficult. The challenge lies in the fact that children may feel they will be risking rejection by being different. The challenge is also magnified when other children in the class start asking questions about the reason for fasting and thus highlighting this difference and making Muslim children feel self-conscious and sometimes embarrassed.

Questions non-Muslim children ask Muslim ones may be about the reasons for fasting and whether the purpose behind fasting can still be achieved or not while eating some sweets or drinking a cup of water only. They may also ask questions about whether Muslim children feel tired or exhausted due to fasting and show feelings of being sorry for them. It is not easy for children to cope with such feelings and remarks. Such situations can be challenging to young adults as well, not just children. The question is how can we equip our children to help them deal with this difference?

1. **Build Confidence:** When we arm our children with a sense of self-worth, by highlighting their strength and determination to choose fasting and to continue fasting, we help them cope with outside pressures.

2. **Encouragement:** It is important to continually remind your child of how proud you are of his fasting and how Allah will reward him. This way we are teaching our children that self-worth and strength comes from the inside not the outside. This confidence will be a safeguard against peer pressure in general and will greatly help in Ramadan.

3. **Direct the Child as to Whom We Should Please:** The child must know that in our life we only seek Allah's love and our deeds should please Allah, and when Allah is pleased then people will accept you Insha'Allah.

4. **We need to teach our children that people are different and that it is normal to be different:** Allah has created us with much difference and diversity and us as human beings should accept each other and respect differences between us.

5. **Involve them with Muslims:** Being together will give them the support and strength.

Talking to your child about it all will help you see how he or she feels and will give the child a chance to make decisions. Involving children in deciding whether to fast or not helps give them a lot of pride in their action when they fast, as well as a lot of stamina to continue fasting, because they made the decision. The years before fasting is obligatory should be used properly to give children confidence in their physical capabilities to fast, as well as confidence in their decision-making abilities.

It should also be stressed that the time will come when there will no longer be a choice because Allah knows best that then it will be within their capabilities.

If your child is physically able to go to school every day and concentrate, then exams shouldn't be a problem. On the contrary, you can encourage the child to fast during exam times based on the fact that Allah will bless the day and effort because he or she is fasting.

Finally, remember always that we parents are the models for our children. If we raise our iman and succeed in that, we will give the needed example to our children.

May Allah link our hearts and the hearts of our children to Iman (faith) and grant us, and them his mercy and forgiveness and accept our fast and good deeds. Ameen.

Your brother in Islam
Ibrahim Mourad

For further information on this topic download the article 'Is Your Child Ready to Fast?' on our website:
www.messagemagazine.com.au

The Pentathlon: 5 Ways to Give

The modern day pentathlon contains five events; pistol shooting, fencing, 200 metres freestyle swimming, show jumping and a three kilometre cross-country run. The first thing that struck my mind when I researched the events that make up a pentathlon is the stark differences in all five sports with very little overlapping found between them. Athletes competing in a pentathlon cannot restrict themselves to the mastering of only one skill otherwise they stand no chance in winning the overall competition.

When the word charity or sadaqah is mentioned, our minds naturally drift towards the giving of money. Rather, as Muslims, our charity obligations should be treated like one competing in a pentathlon. Limiting ourselves to only providing financial assistance to others is in fact like an athlete competing in a pentathlon limiting themselves to the mastering of only one sport of the five that makes up their game.

The following article will look at *other lasting charity acts that we can do physically besides that of giving away our money to various causes as the Prophet(s) said*: "Every good deed is charity." (Bukhari)

He also said: "On every person's joints or small bones (i.e. fingers and toes), there is sadaqah (charity) due every day when the sun rises. Doing justice between two people is sadaqah; assisting a man to mount his animal, or lifting up his belongings onto it is sadaqah; a good word is sadaqah; every step you take towards prayer is sadaqah; and removing harmful things from pathways is sadaqah." [Muslim]

So based on the hadeeth above, here are five ways you can start to give 'physical' sadaqah this Ramadan. The list is hardly exhaustive however as you read, ask yourself how you can implement these acts of charity in your daily schedule to increase your good deeds inshaAllah:

1. Always start with a smile:

We can never underestimate the wonders behind a smile. The Prophetic teachings tell us that every smile is charity. So step one is to make sure you smile; often opportunities in the day arise where we can effortlessly smile and spread the salaam, such as when you're on the road travelling, going to work, at the mosque, when you pass by a homeless person, when you meet guests or see children (as often it brings a smile to their face too!)

2. Remember Allah frequently:

To remember Allah is to give sadaqah with your tongue. The value and weight of dhikr are heavy and outstanding, and is our key to being rich in our relationship with Allah (swt). In an amazing narration the Prophet advised the one who could not give money to charity, or offer anything from their possessions, to increase in performing dhikr as a better equivalent.

Allah (swt) says in Surah Al-Baqarah: 'Remember Me, and I will remember you' [2:152]. You might wonder where you can start as there are so many adhkars for so many occassions. Here's a simple step by step process to engrain daily remembrance of Allah in your day to day life:

1. Visit MakeDua.com or purchase the Fortress of the Muslim Dua book and learn 2-3 adhkar for 2-3 occassions, e.g. what to say when you wake up, what to

'Physical' Sadaqah

say when you sleep and what to say when you put on clothes.

2. Repeat these adhkar on a daily basis initially from the book/website and eventually from your memory. Continue for at least a week.

3. Repeat the above process looking for new duas/occasions for supplications.

Al-Hamdulillah nowadays you can find the Fortress of the Muslim in many bookstores and even phone applications.

3. Remove harm from the pathway:

A noble act we often overlook is to remove some thing harmful from others' pathway. It may be a piece of glass that is dangerous on the road,a needle on the floor, or a disturbing rock on a busy school road where children may trip and fall.

This simple act can be a means of forgiveness as many Hadeeths narrated the benefit of removing harm from the road. Moreover, this will increase your social alertness and help improve your surroundings /community to make it a pleasant place to be.

4. Say good words:

Our tongue can be the cause of our destruction or our salvation, yet we often speak before we think (see the article10 Ways to Control your Tongue). Ask yourself if your words will be a source of benefit or comfort to someone? Have you mentioned the Name of Allah in your conversation? Good words are like a plant that flourish with many fruits, as the Prophet (s) said: "It is also charity to utter a good word." (Bukhari).

You can alleviate someone's suffering by reminding them to 'be patient', to 'have trust in Allah' or say Alhamdulillah'/ 'JazakAllahu khair'. You can share knowledge in a conversation about something new you've learnt thus benefitting others. In social psychology great emphasis lies in using optimism when talking to people so if you know of someone in hardship this Ramadan console them and assist them through your goodly words and efforts.

5. Donate your talents/skills/strength:

This Ramadan donate your skills/talent/strength to your community:

- Help setup Iftar venues.

- Use your computer skills to help local dawah/charity group with administrative work.

- If you're good at speeches/dawah, be the ambassador for the Muslim community in dawah events/Ramadan ceremonies.

- If you fall into the arts and craft category – design cards for Eid, then sell them for a worthy cause (you'll probably even be starting up a good business without realising!)

There are many other forms of physical sadaqah I have not touched upon above, such as visiting the sick, caring for an orphan, taking care of your body and looking after your parents, amongst others... I want to hear from you: What form of physical sadaqah will you do this Ramadan?

Your sister in Islam
Ameenah Mohammed

SWIMMING: HOW TO KEEP RAMA FOR THE REST OF T

Almost invariably it happens a few days after the end of Ramadan; the letdown. You literally feel like a kayaker trying to paddle upstream to keep the same enthusiasm and hype going that you, your family and friends felt for the last 30 days.

However the fasting is now finished; the nightly prayers are over; the group gatherings to break the fast have vanished. We can eat, drink, and be merry again when the sun is shining. And that special feeling you have in your heart - the one that keeps you going despite your hunger and thirst - gradually fades away.

The spiritual high evaporates, and all you are left with are the bad habits you tried to shed during Ramadan, but mysteriously rear their ugly heads once it is over.

Ramadan is supposed to increase your faith and God-consciousness: **"Believers! Fasting has been prescribed for you - as it was prescribed for those before you - so that you may be conscious of God."** (Al-Baqarah, 2:183).

The point is not to be an angel for Ramadan and a demon at other times. The lessons learned and spiritual benefits gained during that month are intended to carry over for the rest of the year until next Ramadan. Yet frequently they do not. Is there anything we can do about it? Absolutely and here are five ways we can try to keep the spirit of
Ramadan alive and well throughout the rest of the year.

GOOD HABITS KEPT UP

More than just denying oneself food and drink, the fast of Ramadan is a complete body-and-soul fast. Although this should be the behaviour of the believer at all times, when one is fasting, he or she should take special care not to harm anyone, curse anyone, or do anything wrong. In fact, Prophet Muhammad (s) said: **"Whoever does not give up forged speech and evil actions [while fasting], God is not in need of his leaving his food and drink."** Well, once Ramadan is over, these good behaviours should continue.

For instance, if you took the opportunity of the month of Ramadan to try to curb talking about other people, why not continue to refrain from doing so after Ramadan is over? We should continue to go to the mosque for congregational prayers. It is so amazing to see the mosque - which was packed just a few days earlier - stand almost completely empty during Isha', or night prayers, after Ramadan. If we can go to the mosque each day during Ramadan, we can get there every day during the rest of the year.

FAST THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

I must admit that this is the most difficult one for me to follow, but I must mention it anyway. The fast of Ramadan is obligatory for every adult Muslim, but there are numerous other fasts that Muslims are encouraged to undertake throughout the year, and we should try to participate. For instance, Prophet Muhammad (s) encouraged Muslims to fast six days of the month of Shawwal, the month after Ramadan. The reward is equivalent to fasting the entire year.

In a few months, the season of Hajj will begin, and those Muslims who do not perform the Hajj are encouraged to fast the day of Arafat, when all the pilgrims will be standing on that plain and begging God for forgiveness. We should fast that day. For Ashura, the day that commemorates the exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt, Muslims are encouraged to fast that day as well as the day before.

ADAN ALIVE
HE YEAR

For the very ambitious, the Prophet (s) used to fast every Monday and Thursday, and if one is able, he or she could follow this Sunnah, or tradition of the Prophet. If this is too much, perhaps we can fast one, two, or three days each month. Whatever the number, we should try to fast outside of Ramadan to help keep the spirit of the month alive in our daily lives.

MIYAM PRAYING

During the month of Ramadan, Muslims gather together and perform the Isha, or night prayer, and then special devotional prayers, called Tarawih, in congregation (together these are called, qiyam, extra devotional night prayers). It is such a wonderful time, and it is perhaps - after actually getting to eat and drink--the best part of Ramadan. We are all together in the mosque, and we get to hear the entire Qur'an recited if we go every night of Ramadan.

Why not, at home, have your own "mini-Tarawih"? You can either read what you have already memorised, or you can read from the Qur'an itself. If you continue this throughout the year, it is quite possible to finish reading the entire Qur'an many times over. This is an excellent way to keep the feeling and spirit of Ramadan alive.

CHARITY

Ramadan is also the month of charity. It was said that the Prophet (s), already the most generous of men, was even more generous during the month of Ramadan. Along with teaching the believer discipline and spiritual focus, the fast of Ramadan is a potent reminder that there are millions of people around the world who must forgo food and drink involuntarily, out of sheer poverty.

As a result, Muslims are frequently motivated to give to the poor during Ramadan and the reward for an act of charity - already substantial - is multiplied many times over in the month of Ramadan. Muslims often discharge their obligatory annual alms tax, the Zakah, during this month.

Yet that does not mean we should be stingy and miserly throughout the rest of the year. We should continue to be generous even when it is not Ramadan, perhaps devoting a little bit of what we earn to help the poor.

"HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE LAST RAMADAN..."

Another beautiful aspect of Ramadan is the frequent invitation to people's homes for iftar meals after sunset. Here, Muslims gather and break their fast together. Many times, it is an opportunity to see friends (and maybe even family) they do not normally get a chance to see during the rest of the year. Well, the same theme applies: if you can do it during Ramadan, you can do it at any other time as well. Why not keep up the contacts made during Ramadan throughout the rest of the year? Have monthly gatherings at each other's homes or at a favourite restaurant. Let it not be another year when you say to a friend, "Wow! I haven't seen you since last Ramadan!"

For Muslims, the month of Ramadan is the most wonderful time of the year. The benefits and beauties of this month are boundless, and - even though I can once again drink my cans of Red Bulls or my French-Irish-Vanilla-Chocó-Crème Coffee chino in the morning - I always feel a tinge of sadness when Ramadan is over.

Yet we can keep the spirit of the month alive and well throughout the rest of the year. For that is the whole purpose of the fast, isn't it - to be conscious of God?

Raya Shokatfard

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EID: THE CLOSING CEREMONY

The hard work is over, the competitors have given it all they've got and everyone is ready to call it a day. The Olympics' Closing Ceremony is one of the highlights of the Games and usually the hosting country will spend millions of dollars and endless days, months and even years planning to make this ceremony a successful event. It's interesting to see that so much time, effort and resources are wasted on one night – only one night in every four years!

These days it seems like we place the same emphasis on Eid – wasting so much time, effort and resources on one day for the wrong reasons. People spend hours baking sweets for Eid, they spend days shopping to buy the perfect outfit with the perfect shoes, handbags and accessories to match! They spend too much time planning and cooking food for just one day that, at times, it seems that Muslims have forgotten the real reason why we fast the month of Ramadan.

I'm not trying to send the message that it's wrong to celebrate Eid – of course not! It should be something we look forward to. It should be something that our whole family must participate in. It should be a day where we share a meal with our family and friends and look smart in our new clothes. It should be a day that we prepare for - but we should 'tone' it down.

Do we really need to spend hours in the kitchen making a lifetime's supply of sweets that we end up giving almost all away to colleagues, neighbours, the neighbour's relatives, all of the staff at your children's school and almost all of the residents living in your street?! Aren't a few batches of sweets enough? The last couple of nights in Ramadan should be spent in ibadah trying to collect as many hasanat as possible, not cooking.

We spend a whole month learning and practising self-restraint and then ruin it on the morning of Eid! We forget the feeling of hunger and proceed to waste food the minute Ramadan is over. Again, I'm not saying that you shouldn't share a meal with your family on the morning of Eid but just 'tone' it down. How about everyone brings something to share, something light on the stomach and that's not so hard or time-consuming to prepare. This way everyone gets a chance to focus on the things that are more important than food and your stomach will thank you for it.

Take the Olympic Games into consideration again. Once it is over and everyone has partied themselves silly at the closing ceremony, do the athletes pack up their things, go home and sit in front of the television – twiddling their thumbs and waiting around four years until the next games?? Most definitely not!! The minute these athletes get home they get back into the routine of training. They reflect on how well they per formed at the games and work on how they can improve for the next round of games.

As Muslims, we should take these athletes' attitudes as an example and reflect on our own ' performance' during Ramadan. Did we achieve all the goals that we set out to do at the beginning? How can we improve our 'performance' next Ramadan? We should also con sider all the good improvements we made during this holy month and try to continue on with them throughout the year. Keep trying to read the Quran daily, keep trying to wake up for Fajr prayer, keep trying to be good to others and treating all with respect. Don't give up on these good qualities and the self-restraint you practised during Ramadan.

When the closing ceremony is over, the Olympic torch is kept burning – it keeps burning until the next round of games. It's a symbol of hope and courage for all future athletes. Let's keep our 'torch' burning - our faith, our deen – until the next Ramadan inshallah.

Happy fasting and Eid Mubarak
Your sister in Islam
Meyznah Khodr

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Mohammed Harris

PH: (02) 9790 5500 Fax: (02) 9790 1622

Office: Level 1, 58 Restwell Street,

Centro Bankstown NSW 2200

Chartered Accountants

Amusements Page

Olympic Word Find

V	Y	F	P	F	E	O	G	V	W	L	E	E	R	K
Y	O	W	I	H	J	U	R	A	P	C	R	C	U	U
S	P	L	X	N	I	K	C	L	A	D	F	A	N	V
X	R	G	U	D	A	O	G	I	R	O	L	R	D	M
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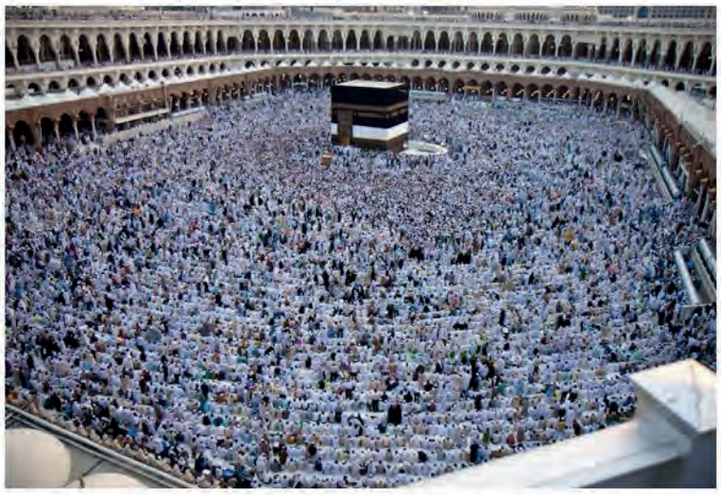
M	G	V	U	L	Z	E	K	Z	K	O	S	O	Q	N

Boxing
Gold
Events
Compete
Rewards
Paradise
Winners
Race
Finals
Flame
Guide
Speed
Ramadan
Volunteer

Dot - to - Dot Puzzle

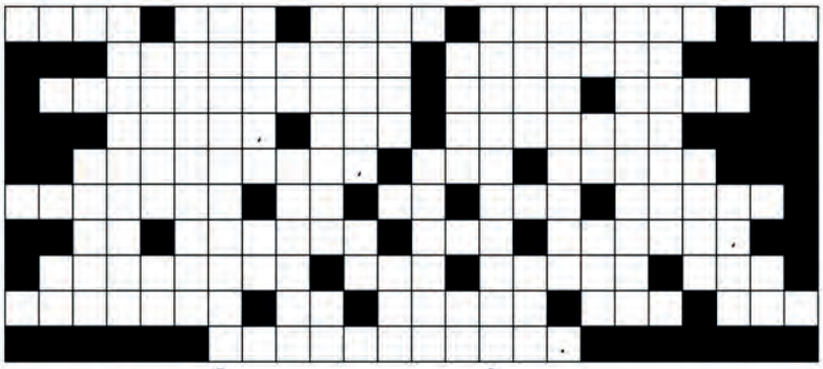
Picture of the Month



Pilgrims gather on first day of Eid, Nov. 7, 2011 (Photo courtesy of Zamzam Hajj Group).

Fallen Phrase:

The reward of healthy competition



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P O R E V M E N S N O H N T W A I D E W H O
W E O I P R D I D E N A R T D H E T E D U H I
B F L R E O E A I N E S L F T N O R D I R R H N
R H E H A A F E S I S D T T E W M S Y S H T I S

Sudoku

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		8	3		5	6		
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		6				3		
7			9		1			4
5								2
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	4		5		8		7	

SUDOKU

Fill in all the squares of the grid so that each row, each column and each 3x3 section contains all the numbers 1-9 inclusive.

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