

A Day and a Night in Ramadan (part 2 of 2): Worship of the Night

Description: A typical night in the life of a Muslim in Ramadan.

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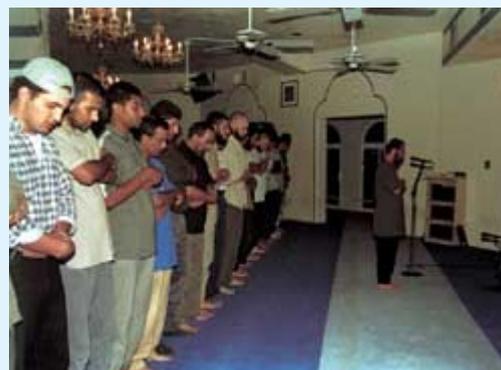
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After performing the dusk prayer, Muslims return to their homes either to continue with their appetizers or eat dinner. Most people, however, choose not to eat much, as it will hinder them in performing that worship which is the delight of the believer in Ramadan - the *taraweeh* prayer. This prayer is held immediately after the night prayer, which is performed when the last traces of dusk disappear, about an hour and a half after the dusk prayer.

The *Taraweeh* (Night Prayer)

The *taraweeh* is a special prayer performed in congregation. It is quite long, lasting about an hour to an hour and a half. It is performed every night of Ramadan, and in it most of the *Imams*, or prayer leaders, seek to complete the recitation of the entire Quran. In it Muslims pray to their Lord, standing, bowing and prostrating to Him, and gain the opportunity to listen to the Quran in its entirety, listening to its verses in a



melodious voice as if they were being revealed then and there. Mosques with more proficient reciters tend to fill quickly, so worshippers arrive earlier than the stated time to reserve their place. Some mosques have over a thousand worshippers who come from all over the city to attend. Indeed it is an experience one awaits an entire year to experience. The *taraweeh* prayer is a means of forgiveness, as the Prophet said:

"Whoever stands the night in prayer in Ramadan believing in God and seeking His reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)

Worshippers listen to the Quran being recited in prayer and ponder over its meanings, and the voice of the *Imam* has much to do with the effect it has on people. In various mosques, it is not rare to see people crying while listening to its verses, verses which speak of the blessings of God, His Mercy and Love, His Paradise which He has reserved for the patient believers, as well as verses which speak about the sufferings of Hell. The Quran is a revelation which speaks to each individual, and thus each individual feels that God is directly addressing him when he hears it. Thus the feelings which arise while listening to its recitation is truly incomparable and indescribable.

At the end of the *taraweeh* prayer, the Imam and the congregation raise their hand in

supplication to God for themselves and for the Muslims, asking God to forgive their sins, give them strength to practice their faith and remain firm, enter them into Paradise, to cure the sick, to forgive those who have already passed away, and all other good things of this world and the next. They also ask God to save them from the punishment of the day of Judgment, to ease their account on that day, and also to ease the sufferings of their brethren throughout the world. It is not uncommon to find the majority of the congregation in tears begging their Lord. Indeed the *taraweeh* prayer is one of the highlights of Ramadan and plays a great role in giving inspiration to and the rectitude of the Muslims.

After the *taraweeh*, Muslims return to their homes and eat dinner, and then retire to bed in preparation for their early rise for the predawn meal.

As one can see, Ramadan is a month in which various kinds of worship are performed to God. Ramadan is like a training period in which Muslims change their lifestyles to one which is in accord to God's commandments. From the time a person awakens in the morning, throughout the day and into the night, a Muslim is performing various types of worship, some obligatory while others voluntary, all in order to gain the pleasure of his Lord. This month is indeed a key factor in the lives of Muslims, a period of rejuvenation in which the believer is inspired for another year in his life, one filled with the pleasure of God and void of His anger.

There are other special features in Ramadan.

The Last Ten Nights

1. "Indeed we have revealed it (the Quran) in the Honored Night.
2. And what will explain to you what the Honored Night is?
3. The Honored Night is better than a thousand months.
4. In it, the angels descend as well as the Spirit (Gabriel) by the permission of their Lord, with all types of decrees.
5. 'Peace' it is until the rising of dawn." (Quran:97:1-5)

It was Ramadan in which the Quran was revealed from the heavens to the Earth. More specifically, it was one of the last ten nights of this blessed month. The Prophet said:

"Seek the Honored Night in the last ten." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)

On that night, worship and good deeds are better than performing them for a thousand months, as mentioned in the verses above. Thus the Prophet would increase his worship by staying awake the whole night in worship.

"When he entered the [last] ten [nights] of Ramadan, the Prophet would 'rollup his sleeves' and

give life to the whole night, and waken his family." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)

Muslims in Ramadan seek this Honored Night in order that they may be given an increase in reward. Muslims spend the whole night in worship, from praying the *taraweeh* prayer to reading the Quran, supplicating to God, and praying extra voluntary prayers. During these nights, there is even an extra congregational prayer held in the mosques which lasts for about an hour and a half to two hours up until the time of the predawn meal. Nights are alive with worship, and people for these ten nights expend all efforts in doing so, seeking that they may have spent the Honored Night in the worship of God. The Prophet said:

"Whoever stood in prayer in the Honored Night, believing in God and hoping for His reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)

Ramadan is a month of forgiveness, and people hope that they will people from those who are saved from the Fire:

"God chooses who will be saved from the Fire (in Ramadan), and that is every night." (*Al-Tirmidhi*)

For this reason in Ramadan, people fast, pray, and seek the Honored Night in order that they may be forgiven for their shortcomings and enter Paradise.

Umrah (Lesser Pilgrimage to Mecca)

The Prophet encouraged people to visit the Kaaba and perform the lesser pilgrimage, or *Umrah*. He said:

"Indeed performing Umrah in Ramadan is equal to performing Hajj with me." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)



Thus, millions of people flock to Mecca to perform this lesser pilgrimage, most coming during the last ten days of the month hoping to earn the reward of Hajj and also witnessing the prayers at the Kaaba, an exhilarating experience for the believer. One meets Muslims from all parts of the world, from all cultures and races, and all have congregated in this sacred sanctuary, fasting throughout the day and worshipping throughout the night, all to earn the pleasure of their Creator, their Lord.

A Month of Forgiveness

We mentioned various Prophetic sayings which state that the various types of worship in Ramadan are a means for forgiveness. Fasting, the *taraweeh* prayer, and praying in

the Honored Night are all means of forgiveness.

"Whoever fasts the month of Ramadan, believing in God and hoping for His reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)

"Whoever stands the night in prayer in Ramadan believing in God and seeking His reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)

"Whoever stood in prayer in the Honored Night, believing in God and hoping for His reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)

Ramadaan in general is a month of savior from the Fire:

"God chooses who will be saved from the Fire (in Ramadan), and that is every night." (*Al-Tirmidhi*)

A Month of Charity

As mentioned before, people seek to feed others with food for which to break their fast and donate food rations to needy families to suffice them the month of Ramadan. In addition to this, people are more charitable in general during Ramadan, as charity is considered worship for which God will reward them. The companioned the Prophet, Abdulah b. Abbas, said:

"The Prophet was the most generous of people, and he was even more generous in Ramadan." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)

In order to increase in their good deeds, some Muslims choose to offer their Zakaah^[1], or obligatory annual charity, in this month as well.

Private Devotion

There is a special type of worship in Islam in which one devotes himself to the mosque for a period of time, whether it be for a day or a week, and spends his time in reciting the Quran and mentioning praises of God, again a training for having a person becoming accustomed to living a life revolved around the worship of God. In secluding oneself from one's daily routine and indulging in the worship of God, he learns to prioritize his life and give less worth to the life of this world. The Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, himself would practice this act of devotion, called *I'tikaaf*, during the last ten days of Ramadan. He would pitch a tent in the mosque and seclude himself in it, busying himself in various types of individual worship.

Muslims around the world take leave from their work or school and try to fulfill this act of worship, but because of its difficulty, as it entails a type of cutting off from daily life, few people do so. None the less, the majority of the congregational mosques do have a few people who take to this worship.

Conclusion

As one can see, Ramadan is indeed a very special time for Muslims around the world.

It is a month of worship in which sinners repent and return to God, and the believer rejuvenate their faith. It is a training period in which one becomes accustomed to leading a life in accordance to the commands of God and seeking His Pleasure. It is a time when one strengthens their relationship with their Creator. It is a time when one trains himself to do extra acts of worship in addition to the obligatory. The month of Ramadan is one which has no match, and the feelings Muslims have in this month are unexplainable. For this reason, the companions of the Prophet would ask God to give them the blessing to experience Ramadan six months before its arrival, and for six months after its departure, they would seek forgiveness from God for their shortcomings in it. We ask God to accept the Muslims fasting and praying in this blessed month, and to give others the guidance to be able to fast it as Muslims.

Endnotes:

[1] See (<http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/46>).

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