

The Ramadhan Checklist

When starting on a journey, most people like to have a list of items that they will need. Before departure they make sure they have all the items. That is to ensure they do not spoil their trip by forgetting something, or not being well equipped for the trip. A journey is usually exciting, and travellers like to make the most of the opportunity to enjoy themselves.

Ramadhan is a spiritual journey for the believer. For the whole month, he travels to get nearer to Allah. On the way he will pass many obstacles and diversions which may hinder and slow his passage. To make sure that his journey is swift and progressive, he needs many items. Preparing for Ramadhan means to ensure one has the necessary equipment for the journey.

The following are some of the necessary items for a believer's trip towards Allah.

An Attitude of Anticipation and Enthusiasm

A believer looks forward to the month of Ramadhan. He enjoys the beauty of spirit that Ramadhan begins, the warmth of carrying out the orders of Allah, the hope of achieving His pleasure, and the happiness at being able to obey the commands of Allah. He is happy when the month arrives and sad when it departs.

Flexible Time and Schedule

Ramadhan requires that we set aside more time than normal for worship and prayers. A believer plans his time in such a way that in Ramadhan he is not overwhelmed by the demands of the world. He lessens work if possible and cuts down on activities which can be put to a halt for a little while. The chance to earn rewards and blessings from Allah in this special time will only last a limited time. Believers must make sure their daily schedules allow maximum benefit of this special time.

A Qur'an with a good translation

An important part of worship in Ramadhan includes reciting the Qur'an regularly. A Hadith tells us, *Ramadhan is the Spring of the Qur'an*. Understanding the word of Allah, and pondering over it should be daily activities in this holy month. A believer makes sure he has a copy of the Qur'an which is easy to read, and which has a simple translation which he can understand. If time permits, he should also read the commentary of the Qur'an. It is also important to have the right books for the Duas and A`amaals for this month.

A Donation to a Worthwhile Charity

Ramadhan is the best time to donate in the way of Allah. To feed the hungry or give to the needy is an act of great reward, especially during the holy month. Before the month of Ramadhan, a believer decides how much he can afford to give, chooses a worthwhile charity and sends his donation. This is a recommended charity, different from the zakatul Fitra which is obligatory for Eid. Hadith tells us that charity cools the anger of Allah and brings down many blessings on the giver. In the month of Ramadhan this rewards is multiplied many times.

A Determination to Avoid Sins

Fasting is not mere abstinence from food and drink, as we have heard many times. It is also staying away from all sins. While fasting, all the organs of the body fast, and refrain from doing anything which would displease Allah.

A believer makes a firm decision to avoid all sins that he commits most often, and plans how he will stay away from them during the month. This conscious preparation of a war against sins is a very necessary item in the baggage of a believer in his journey towards Allah.

A Desire to Help Others

In his sermon at the approach of the holy month of Ramadhan, the Prophet (S) said: *Whoever lightens the work of his workers in this month, Allah will make easy his accounting on the Day of Judgement.*

This does not only apply to those who have workers working for them. To help and lessen the work of others: parents, siblings, relatives, friends, etc. during the holy month is an act of great virtue. It eases the load of the other person, and brings about kindness and affection. Cooperating and assisting one another is greatly loved by Allah.

These and other similar important items are necessary for a successful journey during the month of Ramadhan. Each believer must try to be prepared as possible, lest the opportunity to redeem himself pass away. It is a great loss for the believer if the whole month of mercy and blessings passes, and he

has not been able to achieve forgiveness of his sins, and has not won the pleasure of Allah, and the rewards that He gives so abundantly during Ramadhan. To avoid such a failure, it is necessary to keep a Ramadhan checklist that is regularly updated.

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