

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

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Ramadan: A Reboot for the Soul

Many years ago, I worked as a programmer in the offices of a university's physical plant. A lovely young woman accountant who knew where I was heading always said something about my going to reboot as I passed her office on my way to the mosque for Friday prayers.

I have often thought of that concept since those days. To me it perfectly describes what happens during prayer and I get the same sense of a reset and strengthening of my essence — my soul — during the lunar month of the Ramadan fast.

“Strange”, you may think. However, consider the following. When we exercise the body the muscles, bones, etc., grow stronger. Similarly, as we discipline ourselves to regular prayer and to fasting from food and drink in the period from dawn to sunset for Ramadan our souls grow stronger. Also, just as exercise helps the body to rid itself of impurities, fasting and prayer helps purify the soul.

In another way of looking at this process, as we strengthen the soul by obeying God's commandments, it be-

gins to become a master over the body which comes to obey its direction with increasing readiness and eventual enjoyment. When that happens the “reboot” process gives a small taste of the paradise we strive to attain in the hereafter.

Since we are still in Ramadan let us focus a bit more on what happens during this sacred month, at least as I perceive it.

The following verses state the major goals for a *Muslim* (Submitter) in this life: *You shall commemorate the name of your Lord, to come ever closer and closer to Him. (Quran 73:8)*

You shall sing the praises of your Lord, and be with the prostrators. And worship your Lord, in order to attain certainty. (Quran 15:98–99)

When my body reacts to the fast with a growling stomach or a parched throat, it reminds me why I fast: to obey God.

He helps us get through the day, even during the long, hot days of summer. I am fortunate that as I am getting older and my body is a bit more sensitive

to the fast, Ramadan in my part of the world has moved into the spring. This happens because the Muslim calendar is a lunar calendar which moves up about 10 days each year in relation to the solar calendar.

This change in seasons helps us see that our souls have become strong enough to control our bodies despite the changes in the numbers of hours they fast. I admit I am reassured by that fact because sometimes I find it difficult to tell if my soul has grown stronger.

I realize now that I am not really doing anything. God does for me what I cannot do for myself. He grows my soul, purifies it and my body. In truth, since only He can claim omnipotence, He does everything good in my life. When I try to interfere, I invariably make a mess of it. So, over the years I learned to trust in Him and stay out of His way to the best of my ability. Just that lesson makes my life much more pleasant and might well be considered a mini reboot.

Gaining control over my body provides just one benefit of the Ramadan fast.

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More important, I find myself thinking about God, His mercy and goodness, and all His amazing attributes much more during the fast. I hope and pray this will help me keep those thoughts more frequent even when I am not fasting. Thankfully, that does seem to happen, though I can improve a great deal.

Over the years I see how God has been sculpting me, so to speak. As the stone, metal, wood, or clay cannot claim credit for the skill of the artist's work, I give all credit to God.

My head and heart give deep thanks to our awesome Creator and Sustainer for all His blessings on me, this insignificant bit of earthly material!

Lisa

[Original article published in Medium]

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Ramadan

As Ramadan approaches, I tend to get nervous as if it will be the first time experiencing a submitter's fast. I use the term "submitter's fast" because the way we fast for Ramadan is unique. In this modern age, there are many well-known types of "fasts". There are fasts that allow one to eat and drink certain foods during fasting hours. There are fasts that call for only drinking certain liquids during fasting hours. The term "full fast" is designated for those who go without eating or drinking anything except water. In the "submitter's fast" we don't eat or drink anything from dawn until sunset. We can also call it the "training to be elite fast." [56:10-11] *Then there is the elite of the elite. They are those who will be closest (to God).*

God willing, if we follow God's guidance to enter Paradise, including observing the month of Ramadan, then we will be of those closest to God.

The most common question I'm asked during Ramadan by non-submitters is

"why do we fast?" The answer is so simple it usually leaves the person dumbfounded. That answer being salvation. We fast for our salvation.

[2:183] O you who believe, fasting is decreed for you, as it was decreed for those before you, that you may attain salvation.

[2:184] Specific days (are designated for fasting); 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. If one volunteers (more righteous works), it is better. But fasting is the best for you, if you only knew.

These verses are all we need. God told us to fast to attain salvation. If we believe that God alone is the author of the Quran, we will fast. If we believe that God will hold us accountable for upholding or disregarding His commandments, we will fast. If we believe that God alone is our only Lord and Master, we will fast. God even gives pardon to those who cannot physically complete the fast by completing other acts of righteousness. God is truly the Most Merciful.

Humans have a tendency of wanting to know all the reasons why. With modern advances in science and medicine we are aware of certain physical benefits associated with fasting. It is used for weight management, to rest the digestive tract and for lowering lipids. It helps lower blood sugar and cholesterol. Total fasting and crash diets may have adverse effects, but Ramadan fasting includes adequate caloric intake. And abstinence from water for a period is not bad. In fact, it causes concentration of all fluids within the body, producing slight dehydration. The body uses its own water conservation mechanism.

But that's not the reason we fast the month of Ramadan. We fast because the Almighty, the Knower, tells us that it is for our salvation. So why is this commandment and reasoning not enough for most people?

[6:111] Even if we sent down the angels to them; even if the dead spoke to them; even if we summoned every miracle before them; they cannot believe unless GOD wills it. Indeed, most of them are ignorant.

We have all been in conversations with non-submitters who have questions about Ramadan. Many even have the need to insert themselves and their knowledge about something they truly have no knowledge about. I'm referring to the common response to telling someone that we do not eat or drink anything from dawn until sunset. That response is usually something along the lines of "you can't do that!" or "there is no way that's healthy!" As submitters, we try to move the conversation along peacefully. We know that God designed us and that God is the best designer. God would not command something of us that is harmful.

[40:64] GOD is the One who rendered the earth habitable for you, and the sky a formidable structure, and He designed you, and designed you well. He is the One who provides you with good provisions. Such is GOD your Lord; Most Exalted is GOD, Lord of the universe.

[82:7] The One who created you, designed you, and perfected you.

[2:286] GOD never burdens a soul beyond its means: to its credit is what it earns, and against it is what it commits. "Our Lord, do not condemn us if we forget or make mistakes. Our Lord, and protect us from blaspheming against You, like those before us have done. Our Lord, protect us from sinning until it becomes too late for us to repent. Pardon us and forgive us. You are our Lord and Master. Grant us victory over the disbelieving people."

[7:42] As for those who believe and lead a righteous life—we never burden any soul beyond its means—these will be the dwellers of Paradise. They abide in it forever.

Another typical reaction when describing

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our fast to others is “there is no way I could do that!” I usually ask the person how they could possibly know that without even trying. As submitters we know that fasting can be difficult at times, but with God it is actually much easier than it sounds. God makes it possible, only God. How many of us have caught ourselves immediately following Ramadan finding ourselves to be famished at multiple points during the day? Even though we just completed our month of obligatory fasting, now that the month has passed and our obligation has been fulfilled, it seems we lack the same type of control over our bodies. Not that we are actually in control of our bodies anytime. As submitters, we know that God is in full control of our bodies at all times of the year. He is in full control of everything.

[3:109] To GOD belongs everything in the heavens and everything on earth, and all matters are controlled by GOD.

[11:123] To GOD belongs the future of the heavens and the earth, and all matters are controlled by Him. You shall worship Him and trust in Him. Your Lord is never unaware of anything you do

[55:29] Imploring Him is everyone in the heavens and the earth. Every day He is in full control.

What may be happening outside of our Ramadan fast is that we aren't asking God for help as we do during Ramadan. So while we can go all day without eating during Ramadan, on the day after Ramadan, we're ready for lunch at 11. May God guide us to do better at imploring Him even outside of Ramadan.

In addition to fasting, we try to use the month of Ramadan to work on the negative traits that hold us back. On the first day of Ramadan last year, my son gave me attitude. Normally I would have snapped at him for talking to me like that. But God controlled my temper. I realized I didn't want to nullify my fast that day by losing my temper. So, I simply

smiled at him and went on as if nothing had happened. God helped me curb my ego and quell the devilish voice in my head. When little things like this happen, it's a type of confirmation that God is on our side, helping us and making the fasts go forward easier.

God willing, we will continue to remember that God is in full control during this year's Ramadan and beyond. This is “training camp” for the rest of the year. Let's use the blessings of the commandment to observe this month as a means to train ourselves to be even stronger in our righteousness. May God grant each of us a peaceful and accomplished Ramadan. May God accept our submission and guide us to be among the elite of the elite in the Hereafter. Praise God.

[2:185] Ramadan is the month during which the Quran was revealed, providing guidance for the people, clear teachings, and the statute book. Those of you who witness this month shall fast therein. Those who are ill or traveling may substitute the same number of other days. GOD wishes for you convenience, not hardship, that you may fulfill your obligations, and to glorify GOD for guiding you, and to express your appreciation.

[2:187] Permitted for you is sexual intercourse with your wives during the nights of fasting. They are the keepers of your secrets, and you are the keepers of their secrets. GOD knew that you used to betray your souls, and He has redeemed you, and has pardoned you. Henceforth, you may have intercourse with them, seeking what GOD has permitted for you. You may eat and drink until the white thread of light becomes distinguishable from the dark thread of night at dawn. Then, you shall fast until sunset. Sexual intercourse is prohibited if you decide to retreat to the masjid (during the last ten days of Ramadan). These are GOD's laws; you shall not transgress them. GOD thus clarifies His revelations for the people, that they may attain salvation.

Ayyub

A Piece of the PEACE

French Writer, Victor Hugo, once wrote that “peace is the virtue of civilization, war is its crime” (Baça).

In thinking philosophically about peace, the following questions arise: What is peace, and why do we crave it so much?

To me, peace is the opposite of chaos, it's the prevalence of order and justice. It's having a tranquil mind that is resistant to anxiety. Peace is a hallmark of GOD's Kingdom, and chaos is a hallmark of Satan's kingdom.

[56:25] They never hear any nonsense therein, nor sinful utterances.

[56:26] Only the utterance: “Peace, peace.”

[8:73] Those who disbelieved are allies of one another. Unless you keep these commandments, there will be chaos on earth, and terrible corruption.

In fact, we find in the Quran that peace is a way of life in heaven, *[44:55] They enjoy in it all kinds of fruits, in perfect peace.*

When we look at the chaos that is prevalent on planet earth, we are witnessing Satan's incompetence as a god, and the lack of peace on earth is a clear sign of this incompetence.

[2:30] Recall that your Lord said to the angels, “I am placing a representative (a temporary god) on Earth.” They said, “Will You place therein one who will spread evil therein and shed blood, while we sing Your praises, glorify You, and uphold Your absolute authority?” He said, “I know what you do not know.”

The absence of peace, is really the absence of GOD, since one of GOD Almighty's names is the Peace.

[59:23] He is the One GOD; there is no other god besides Him. The King, the Most Sacred, the Peace, the Most

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Faithful, the Supreme, the Almighty, the Most Powerful, the Most Dignified. GOD be glorified; far above having partners.

This is why we crave peace so much, because our souls yearn to be with God, they want a piece of the Peace.

[38:72] "Once I design him, and blow into him from My spirit, you shall fall prostrate before him."

So, when we examine ourselves deeply, we see that any absence of peace in our lives is really the absence of GOD in our lives, and thus the occurrence of chaos.

So, we must ask ourselves, how do we incorporate peace into our lives?

Well, GOD in His infinite Grace and Mercy, has given us the proper instruction in the Quran, starting with our greetings,

[6:54] When those who believe in our revelations come to you, you shall say, "Salāmun 'Alaykum (Peace be upon you). Your Lord has decreed that mercy is His attribute. Thus, anyone among you who commits a transgression out of ignorance, and repents thereafter and reforms, then He is Forgiving, Most Merciful."

There's nothing kinder than wishing someone a calm and anxiety-free mind, it's like we are wishing them a piece of heaven!

Just like we give believers peace, GOD instructs us to give disbelievers peace as well; this is how generous GOD is!

[28:55] When they come across vain talk, they disregard it and say, "We are responsible for our deeds, and you are responsible for your deeds. Peace be upon you. We do not wish to behave like the ignorant ones."

Here, we are given a revolutionary and diplomatic way of dealing with those who disagree with us. We are supposed to leave them in a calm, non-abusive manner. We should be at our best, because GOD commands us to treat them in the best possible manner.

[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.

Peace is particularly attractive in the political sphere. GOD created the salvation of a peace treaty, as a means of alleviating suffering and unnecessary bloodshed.

[4:90] Exempted are those who join people with whom you have signed a peace treaty, and those who come to you wishing not to fight you, nor fight their relatives. Had GOD willed, He could have permitted them to fight

against you. Therefore, if they leave you alone, refrain from fighting you, and offer you peace, then GOD gives you no excuse to fight them.

It may seem that the politicians are "instilling" peace, but it's really GOD's mechanism of a peace treaty that brings about the peace desired.

[8:17] It was not you who killed them; GOD is the One who killed them. It was not you who threw when you threw; GOD is the One who threw. But He thus gives the believers a chance to earn a lot of credit. GOD is Hearer, Omniscient.

GOD also gave the Night of Destiny, which is peaceful until the advent of the dawn. We can take advantage by meditating on GOD's names, and being appreciative of the peace in our lives.

[97:5] Peaceful it is until the advent of the dawn.

Peace is not something to be taken for granted, firstly a reminder for myself! It is a gift from GOD; a provision from the Peace Himself, and as such, we should be appreciative of it that GOD may increase it upon us and upon our families.

[14:7] Your Lord has decreed: "The more you thank Me, the more I give you." But if you turn unappreciative, then My retribution is severe.

Abeer