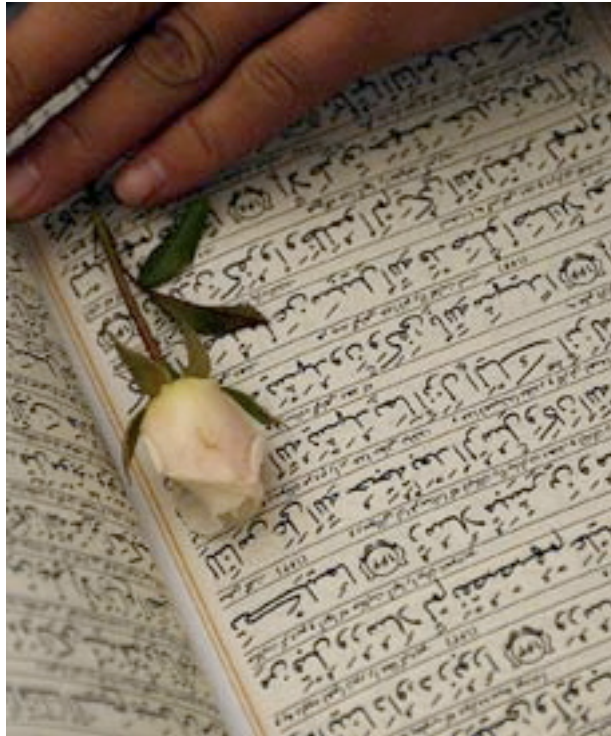


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Annoor Academy

Ramadan Newsletter

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Starving Your Body, Feeding Your Soul

The month that we have all been anxiously awaiting is finally here. And yet again we find ourselves in front of an amazing opportunity to get closer to our Creator. In Ramadan we hold ourselves back from our physical desires by abstaining from food and drink. While we are starving our bodies something truly amazing is happening within us. For this one month we take the time to feed our souls, our souls that are hungry for the spirituality, dedication, and purity that comes in Ramadan. May this Ramadan be a chance for all of us to revitalize our iman and improve our relationship with Allah SWT.

Mariya Farooqi (Editor)

Reviving Our Greeting

"As-salaamu-alaykum"

By: Rashid Dar

Growing up around Muslims, you easily get used to quite a lot of things as a simple manner of custom. You enter the masjid with your right foot, we mouth "bismillah" before eating or drinking, etc. What's needed at times, then, is for us to stop, sit back, and consciously pierce through the rhetoric we repeat day in and day out. Chief among these is our simple act of greeting one another in Islam.

We all know that Muslims greet each other with "as-salaamu 'alaykum". Furthermore, we're huge fans of telling others what it means, eagerly repeating that translation of it: "Peace be upon you." But when pressed further as to *why* this is the Islamic form of greeting one another, we often fall short. Of course, we know that the Prophet (S) encouraged it in numerous ahadith. For instance: Abu Hurairah reported the Messenger of Allah (S) as saying:

By He who holds my soul in His hand, you will not enter Paradise until you believe, and you will not believe until you love one another - shall I not guide you to something that, upon doing it, shall cause you to love one another? Spread the salaam among you.

But we can go further: Why is it that this is the specific phrase the Prophet (S) encouraged us to use? And why does spreading this greeting merit such incredible reward? It seems like such a small action.

Before we get into that, let's take a second look at the phrase: "as-salaamu 'alaykum". The first part of the phrase is "as-salaam" - one of Allah's blessed names, The Peace. Feelings of peace, safety, and contentment come - like all things - solely from Allah, the Source of All Peace, as-Salaam. In reality, what one is conveying via the greeting is: "May blessings of internal peace from Allah, the Source of All Peace, descend upon you."

It then might occur to us that this phrase is not a mere greeting like "Hello" or "Welcome" - it's actually a supplication (du'a). You are making du'a for the person you're greeting by asking Allah for His peace to descend onto the individual.

But we can go even deeper, because what you're asking for is something quite special. You're asking God Almighty that this person experience a sense of divinely given peace in their heart.

We all have stress in our lives. Work, homework, family, money, dreams, ambitions, heartbreak, frustrations...things that take away from our peace of mind, the turbulence in our short ride here in this dusty world. To know that your fellow brother or sister in faith ardently desires peace for you is really a special sort of kindness. Because when someone sincerely wishes peace upon you, it is as if they look you in the eyes, take your hand, and say, "I know how it can be. May you feel God's peace deep inside your heart." In a word, it is the warmest sort of empathy. It is brotherhood and sisterhood. It is, as the Prophet said in the hadith, a means to experience love for one another. How could you not love someone who would sincerely wish peace for you in your life? Isn't that what we're all after, day in and day out?

The problem is that today, most of us have forgotten the point of the words we say

everyday. We can recognize when someone doesn't mean it. When you can't see it in their face or their body language. When you *know* that it's not a sincere du'a for peace that is coming your way, but an inherited tradition, a formality, a matter of custom. That's when it becomes cold and mechanical, and when we treat it as a mere greeting on the level of "hey" or "wassup". But this is not just a mere greeting. It is a prayer. It is how the Best of Creation (S) and his beloved companions addressed one another. "As-salaam 'alaykum" strengthened the bonds they had with one another, it caused love to flow freely between them, it allowed them to trust one another with their lives, it gave them the energy to achieve heights that we can't even dream of today, achievements we talk about in grandiose, almost-mythical tones, wondering just how they did those things. "As-salaamu 'alaykum" brought the light of Islam to the world.

It's also the greeting that the Creator of the Universe used for his Beloved when he burst through every veil of reality upon buraq during his night ascension (m'iraj) to Allah, that same conversation that we recite in every prayer when we sit down:

"as-salaamu 'alayka ayyuha an-nabi, wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuhu."

Now this is interesting because Allah says "as-salaamu 'alayKA" and not "kum". Because at this point the Prophet was totally alone, without any veil between him and Allah nor any angel. He had gone to a place closer, a point beyond comprehension. He uses 'alayKA because a) The Prophet is alone, but also, according to Arabic grammarians, to emphasize intimacy (uns). God is conveying to His Messenger: You, my chosen one, my beloved, the height of my

creation: You have come to Peace. You have come to Mercy. Your gaze did not waver (Qur'an 53:17), and all you sought was Me, and now all I seek is you.

And the Prophet responds: **"as-salaam 'alayna wa 'ala 'ibadillah is-saliheen."**

"May Your peace descend upon us, and upon all righteous servants of God." Which is incredibly thrilling for the immensity and immanence with which this is happening - but also heart-wrenching when one realizes that our beloved Prophet had concern for the peace of mind of his ummah and all those righteous servants of God by wishing peace upon them as well **while being in the direct and unfiltered presence of the The Creator of the Universe!** As a great scholar once said: "Muhammad of Arabia ascended to the highest Heaven and returned. I swear by God that if I had reached that point, I should never have returned." This is the reality of the Prophet. This was his concern for us, his ummah, those who would believe in him and his message despite never having physically beheld him.

And when we recognize this, how can we fail not to praise our beloved Prophet (S) each and every time after mentioning his name? How can we not ask Allah to send His peace and blessings upon him? We should be compelled to do so out of love for his incredible concern, but the Prophet himself also informed us in an authentic hadith that he who sends one blessing upon me, Allah sends 10 blessings upon him!

Let's do our best in sha' Allah to revive the reality of "as-salaamu 'alaykum", to let its nur shine from our face every time we say it. We wish peace upon our fellow brothers and sisters in Islam, upon the Prophets (s), upon our neighbors and coworkers, and upon all of creation, from the squirrels in the trees and the fish in the sea. God truly is great.

Featured Recipe for Ramadan!

BASBUSA

By: Maha Ismail



Ingredients:

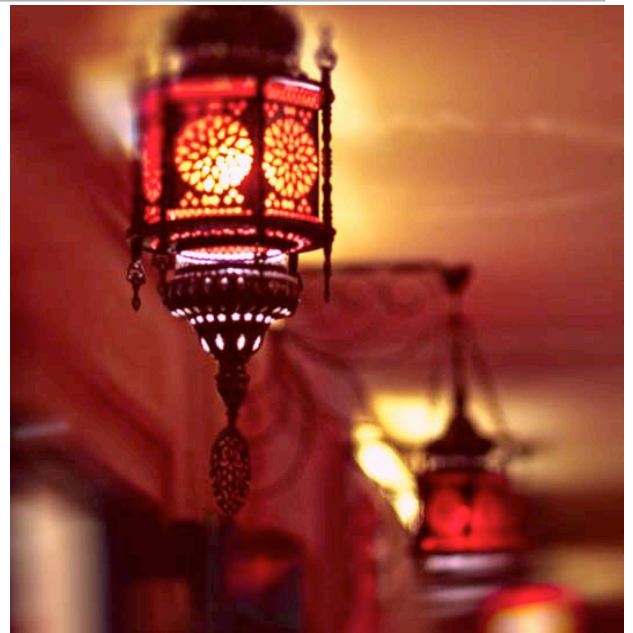
- ¾ Farina Pack (Cream of Wheat or Semolina)
- 3 big spoons of regular flour
- 3 big spoons of chopped coconut
- 2 cups of plain yogurt or 1 cup whole milk
- 2 cups melted unsalted butter
- ¼ tsp salt
- 5 tsp baking powder

Method:

- Mix everything well together (dough should be very soft)
 - Leave it about ½ hour covered to rest
 - Spray (big size) oven tray with nonstick spray
 - Spread dough evenly (1/2 inch thickness) on the tray
 - Top it with desired nuts (almonds, hazelnuts, or peanuts)
 - Put it in 400 degree oven for almost 55 minutes (better to check it after 40 minutes)
 - When it becomes dark brown colored take it out
 - While hot drench it with cold simple syrup and then leave it to cool off for an hour or so, then cut evenly and serve!
-

Reflections of Hadith

By: Manar Mohammad



The Prophet PBUH said, "Whoever observes fasts during the month of Ramadan out of sincere faith, and hoping to attain Allah's rewards, then all his past sins will be forgiven." -Sahih al-Bukhari

This is definitely a hadeeth that we should all keep on our minds during this holy month whenever we feel like we just can't get through the day. There are days in Ramadan when it is so easy to fast and other days when we just don't think we can wait a few more hours. Just think that Allah wouldn't have given you this job you have to do if he knew you couldn't do it.

Allah knows we all have the patience in us to keep up with Ramadan, even if we live in a country where people don't fast when we do or if we don't hear the call for prayer out loud and

instead we have to look at a calendar to know when it is time to eat.

Yes, we might have to go to work where everyone else is eating and we have to refuse to eat. And it may be difficult. But just think that this isn't going for nothing but instead you are being forgiven for your sins and you are doing what's right.

The Prophet PBUH said, "People will not sit remembering God without the angels surrounding them, mercy covering them, peace descending on them."- Sahih Muslim

Ramadan is a time when every minute of every day should revolve around learning patience and gaining taqwa, or a high state of consciousness for Allah (SWT). It is a time when fasting teaches us patience and reading Quran throughout the day and

praying throughout the night strengthens our faith. It is a time when we are always surrounded by the angels protecting us from the Shaytan and Allah's mercy is upon us.

The more we remember Allah (SWT) during this month, the more we are protected by Him and His angels, and the more we gain for the afterlife.

This month is a chance for us to learn to change our way of life and make it just the way we live our life during Ramadan: devoted to Allah.

Every day of our lives should be like that. Remember what the Prophet PBUH said in the Hadeeth above, and it will make you want to keep Allah in your life more and more every day, even after Ramadan is over.

Controlling Our Inner Self: Our Nafs

By: Mariya Farooqi

The Prophet SAWS said: "...And the gates of Heaven will be open in this month and the gates of Hell will be closed. And the devils will be chained." (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

Knowing this hadith, one cannot help but wonder if the devils are chained then why do we still commit sins and make mistakes in Ramadan? How come we do not become perfect worshippers?

The answer to this question is that it is because of our "nafs" or our inner selves. There are basically two entities that prevent us from being good. The first is our external enemy, shaitan. The second is our inner inclinations, which is our nafs. We all want to be close to Allah SWT but at the same time we are only human and so we have inner ailments. We feel anger, pride, jealousy, etc. These are all human ailments that prevent us from doing good. Therefore, our main goal is to train ourselves to control our nafs.

When Ramadan comes around we are given an amazing opportunity to control our nafs because Allah SWT takes out the other factor that affects us, shaitan. The devils are

chained which makes it easier for us to do good. Instead of having two entities that prevent us from doing good we now only have one in Ramadan. So whatever good or bad we do in Ramadan we know that it is purely from ourselves, we cannot blame shaitan for anything that we do. In other words, we are one on one with our nafs and the reason we try to control our nafs is because we do not want to become a slave to it. Following your desires, following whatever your "heart" wishes, these are all ideals of following your nafs, your inner inclinations. Essentially this is really bad for our souls because we become a slave to whatever our nafs wishes.

When we focus on feeding our physical needs with food, water, etc we are neglecting our spiritual needs and our soul starves. Allah SWT takes away our physical needs in Ramadan so that we realize that we can find pleasure, fulfillment and joy from something other than physical and materialistic things.

When we look at prayer we will find the perfect way to control our nafs regularly every day. With prayer we have to disengage from our dunyah five times a day. No matter what you are doing whether you are at work, school, interacting with people, you must disengage for a few minutes to perform your

salah. This is actually an incredibly powerful thing. If we never took a break from the dunyah to focus inward then our whole life is focused on what happens outside of ourselves. So emotionally we will go up and down with the events that happen in our lives. We all know that life is full of ups and downs, good things and bad things. If we only focus on our outer world then internally we will never have consistent peace and tranquility. Prayer gives us the opportunity to pull ourselves away from the dunyah and bring our focus back on our spirituality.

With fasting we find the same idea but at a higher level. When we fast we are cutting ourselves off from our physical needs and focusing entirely on the spiritual. We are starving our bodies but feeding our souls, and for one month we are training our nafs so that for the rest of the year we know how to control it. And while in this training, we find an indescribable feeling of joy, pleasure, and fulfillment. It surprises us because we thought happiness only comes from our physical desires. But indeed your soul craves to be close to Allah and in Ramadan, that's exactly what happens.
