

philosophies and religions teach a person that they cannot attain their moral aims or enter the Kingdom of God unless they uproot themselves from the stem of worldly affairs. Accordingly, it becomes necessary for such a person to divorce their mundane interests, neglect their human responsibilities and resort to some kind of self-torture or severe asceticism of which fasting is an essential part and it has been used as a pretext to cover the humiliating retreat from life.

In Islam, the Fast is no escape from living but a happy marriage with it, not a retreat but a penetration with spiritual armaments, not a negligence but a moral enrichment. The Islamic Fast does not divorce religion from daily life or separate the soul from the body. It does not break but harmonizes. It does not dissolve but transfuses. It does not disintegrate but bridges and redeems.

Even the timetable of the Islamic Fast is a striking phenomenon. In other creeds the timing of fasting is fixed at a certain time of the year in a most inflexible way. But in Islam the time comes with the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the year. The Islamic Calendar is a **lunar** one. Thus over a period of a limited number of years the Islamic Fast covers the differing seasons (rainy, sunny in the Tropics; Winter, Spring, Summer, Autumn in the Temperate zones). In a spiritual sense the Muslim enjoys the inner experience of fasting on various levels, and can taste its spiritual flavours at variant seasons.

This variety of experience remains at all times an impressive feature of the liveliness of the Islamic institution. It also stands as an unflinching expression of readiness, dynamism and adaptability on the part of the believer. This is certainly a healthy, remarkable component of the teachings of Islam.

The spiritual meaning of the Islamic Fast teaches a person the principle of sincere Love; because when a person observes the Fast they do so out of deep love for God. And the person who loves God truly is a person who knows what love is. Fasting equips a person with a creative sense of hope and an **optimistic** outlook on life; because when they fast they are **hoping** to please God and is seeking His Grace. Fasting imbues a person with a genuine virtue of effective devotion, honest dedication and closeness to God; because when they Fast they do so for God and for His sake alone.

Fasting cultivates a vigilant and sound conscience, and there is no better way to do so; because the Fasting person keeps his Fast in secret and well as in public. In Fasting, especially, there is no mundane authority to check a person's behaviour or compel them to observe the Fast. A person keeps it to please God and satisfy their own conscience by being faithful, in secret and in public. Fasting indoctrinates a person in patience and unselfishness; because when they fast they feel the pains of deprivation but endures patiently. This deprivation may be only temporary, yet there is no doubt that the experience makes a person realize the severe effects of such pains over weeks or months or lifetimes.

The meaning of this experience in a social and humanitarian sense is that such a person is much quicker than others in sympathizing with and responding to the needs of the poor/afflicted/displaced. The eloquent expression of unselfishness and genuine sympathy comes with an effective lesson in applied moderation and willpower. The person who observes their Fast properly is certainly one who can discipline and place the self above physical temptations. Such is the person of personality and character, the person of strength and determination. Fasting provides a transparent soul to transcend, a clear mind to think, and a light body to move and act. Here is the never-failing result of carrying a light stomach. Medical instructions, biological rules and intellectual experience all attest to this fact.

Fasting grounds a person in discipline and healthy survival. When a person observes the regular course of Fasting in consecutive days of the Holy Month and in the Holy Months of the consecutive years, they are certainly applying themselves to a high form of discipline and a superb sense of order. Fasting originates in a person the real spirit of social belonging, of unity & brotherhood, of equality before God as well as before the law. This spirit is the natural product of a fact of Muslim life: when a person fasts, they feel they are joining the whole Muslim society in observing the same duty in the same manner at the same time for the same motives to the same end.

People have been crying throughout the ages for acceptable belonging, for unity, for brotherhood, for equality, but how echo-less their voice has been, and how little they succeeded. Fasting is a Divine prescription for self-reassurance & self-control, for the maintenance of human dignity & freedom, for victory & peace. For a revival of hearts. Keep polishing after the intense Ramadan training has ended. **Peace. Salaam.**

# The Heartbeat

## Ramadan: Revive & Polish your heart

Let's all walk together to the step of that vast heartbeat that is ringing, ever stronger & brighter, rising, from the hearts of all those sincere brothers & sisters...in the month called **Ramadan**: Fasting is **not** just about giving up food & drink. **It's about tending to the better angels of our nature.** The Prophet (p) said, "If one is **not** willing to give up bad behaviour during his fast, God has no need for them to give up their food & drink." Muslims are encouraged during this time to be better people, to treat others with more deference. If enticed to argue, the faster is advised to respond: "I am fasting." This means they are in a spiritual awareness of God.

**Empty stomachs, but full souls:**  
Dimensions of a unique spiritual odyssey of nourishment.

**The Muslim empties the stomach of all material things:**  
to fill the **soul** with peace & blessings,  
to fill the **heart** with love & sympathy,  
to fill the **spirit** with piety & faith,  
to fill the **mind** with wisdom & resolution.

Prepared by: **Zamals Software Co.**  
6 Dowding St. Kitty; 225-9031; [zsc@networksgy.com](mailto:zsc@networksgy.com)  
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**T**he month that stands apart in all the year is upon us. Upon us, the time when Muslims stand close, one heartbeat across the earth. Rebirth to all who try; who try harder: upon us. This Ramadan month.

Humanity was reborn when this gift came back to us, in this month. This Islam, Glorious Islam. Through this guide, this unique and extraordinary man, Muhammad (p). With this Quran of God, this miracle, this mercy, full and clear, pure.

Perfection of the Quran which never ceases to unfold: no matter how many times you have read it, the new reading will radiate new connections, deeper threads. A farther Truth. Ramadan is the month to read and re-read the Quran. To truly study it. Like in...S.T.U.D.Y.

“Read.” We know the word as the first sound Muhammad (p) heard the angel of Allah speak. Now we see its innermost meaning, the power and the responsibility: how Allah raised man above all Creation. For what else is there in creation that can do this astounding thing – **R.E.A.D.** And **think? Only we.** Repeat...Only we. And it is our mark, and it is our challenge, by Allah’s infinite benevolence and design.

When we have “read” (learned), we act; when we act, we **interact**. A billion heartbeats pound to a billion fellow pulses, to the very Rhythm of Creation.

The second message said: “By the pen, you are **not** mad Muhammad...This is nothing less than a message to all the worlds.” (68:52) Believe. Understand. Teach. It said.

And the third called out (73). Al-Muzzammil! O you folded in the garments of prayer, far from this world’s vanities: “Remember the Name of your Lord, the Lord of the East and of the West...And establish regular prayer and give Zakat (charity) and loan to Allah...A Beautiful Loan.” **Has there ever been a more breathtaking concept?** The entire universe held and willed by the

Code-Maker to a code so rooted in generosity, generosity becomes the very shape and mould of worship! The worship of Allah is His Right. The mutual care between people is our right. More: our task, our triumph, our reward.

And the fourth message rang (74): Al-Mudaththir! O you clothed and wrapped up, soul bare and open before Allah. “Arise and deliver your warning! And your Lord do Magnify! And for the sake of your Lord be patient in hardship.” Worship. Defined action. Patience – profound, fair. “He is the Lord of Righteousness, the Lord of Forgiveness.” Forgiveness. In these surahs is the heart of Islam, all of it, all the deepest part of it.

The Fast of Ramadan is its heartbeat. The stroke of each hour and day that proclaims, we are Muslims: aware, enabled; caring, thankful.

A real community on a real communal climb to elevation. The Fast in Ramadan was stipulated only on that day the Muslim community truly became a community. And Ramadan marks our elevation among other people: for our belief is **not** afraid of being tested to the core, the longest test.

This Fast is also the always-renewed badge of humanity’s elevation. We who are not just the creation that can think: we who are the only creation that can **“Choose.”** No other part of creation can stop its urge to eat when hungry, for God. No other can recognize the bond and the promise. Allah has endowed us with this will, this incipient greatness.

And when the month has ended, we do rise. We surely have been reborn, as on that Night in a cave at Makkah. We have gone, dauntless, the step beyond biology, to freedom – we have defied the false and empty chains; we have disrupted the hardness of the selfish heart; we have not given up or given in. We have been guided by a commitment of the heart unique on the face of the earth.

We do it for Allah. In truth, this which Allah asks of us is but another precious gift. “A beautiful loan” of ourselves to Allah, of which we are the real recipients. “And whatever good you send forth for yourselves you shall find it with Allah, yes and better and greater a

reward.” (73:20) We need not even wait; the reward is immediate, in the days of true power, the nights of peace. And no matter what the year has brought, in the annual Fast for Allah, we are never lonely. The very Surah which follows the Ramadan injunctions, 2:186: “**And when My servants ask you concerning Me tell them I indeed am very near. I hear and answer the call of the caller whenever he calls Me. So let them listen to My call and believe in Me.**” Very Near. Praise be to Allah!

### The Transformation

In other religions and dogmas, in other philosophies and doctrines, the observer of a Fast abstains from certain kinds of food, or drinks, or material substances, but he is free to substitute for these, to fill his stomach to the top with the substitution, also of material nature. In Islam one abstains from the things of material nature in order to attain spiritual joys and moral nourishment.

The purpose of fasting in other religions and philosophies is invariably partial. It is either for spiritual aims or for physical needs, or for intellectual cultivation: never for all of these combined. But in Islam it is for all these gains and many other purposes; social and economic, moral and humanitarian, private and public, personal and common, inner and outer, local, national and international. The non-Islamic fasting does not demand more than partial abstinence from certain material things. But the Islamic Fast is accompanied by extra devotion and worship, extra charity and study of the Quran, extra sociability and liveliness, extra-self-discipline and conscience-awakening. Thus the Fasting transforms a Muslim into a different person altogether. A Muslim becomes so pure and clean inside as well as out, and their soul is so transparent that they feel close to perfection, because they are growing so near to God.

To the best of our knowledge and on the authority of daily experience, other moral

**The Prophet’s  
Generosity**

knew **No** bounds during Ramadan...  
Does your generosity know any bounds?