

Kalimatut Tayyiba

A Good Word

MONTH OF
RAMADHAN

"Have you not considered how Allah sets forth a parable of a good word being like a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches are in heaven, yielding it's fruit in every season with the permission of its Rabb..."

14:24



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THE MONTH OF RAMADHAN

The Prophet (pbuh) has said about the month of Ramadhan:
"...It is the month which invites you to be the guests of Allah and invites you to be one of those near Him..."

It is the only month mentioned by name in the Qur'an as the month in which the Qur'an was revealed. The month of Ramadhan in comparison to the Solar calendar comes eleven days earlier every year. Thus, in a cycle of about thirty-three years, it passes through all the seasons successively.

The root word ramada, means to burn due to excessive sun-heat reflected on the desert sands. The ramda is the burning rock. This is why it was called the month of Ramadan. It is also said that it was called the month of Ramadan because people become ramad due to their suffering from the combination of hunger and thirst during a very hot month. Arab linguists say that to make something ramad is to squeeze it between two soft rocks then to pound it. A person fasting, by analogy, pounds his own nature between two rocks: hunger and thirst.

*The Prophet (pbuh) has said:
"The month of Ramadan was named so because it tends to ramad the sins, that is, burn them."
Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)*

During the lifetime of the Prophet (pbuh) the month of Ramadan used to be called Al-Marzooq - the one full of sustenance, due to the abundance of the blessings of Allah in it.



IMPORTANT EVENTS OF THE MONTH OF RAMADHAN

10th Ramadhan	Wafat of Sayyida Khadija (pbuh)
15th Ramadhan	Wiladat of Imam Hasan (pbuh)
17th Ramadhan	Victory of the battle of Badr
19th Ramadhan*	Shab e Zarbat – Imam Ali (pbuh) fatally wounded by a poisonous sword in Masjid e Kufa
21st Ramadhan*	Shahadat of Imam Ali (pbuh)
23rd Ramadhan*	Laylatul Qadr

* All the odd nights in the last ten days of the month of Ramadhan are possible nights of Qadr. However, in ahadith our ma'sumeen have said that the 23rd is the most 'adheem'.



DAY 1 - SERMON OF THE PROPHET (PBUH) ON THE MONTH OF RAMADHAN

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Baqara, aya 183 says:

O you who believe! Siyaam is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you so that you may have taqwa."

Fasting is a universal custom, which is practised by all the religions of the world with more restrictions in some than others. So that it is not misunderstood as simply an act of starvation or self-denial, let us call it by the word Allah has used - Sawm whose plural is Siyaam.

There is a big difference between sawm and mere starvation. The month of Ramadhan is an annual training session where the mental and physical faculties of the human being are disciplined. Siyaam gives us a chance to fine-tune ourselves, increasing our will power in being able to control our desires. For example by not eating and drinking which are normally mubah, it will train us to refrain from that which is haram in other months.

The month of Ramadhan also teaches us to be precise and exact in our timings, to be able to have a schedule in our lives. Most of us know the exact timings of salaa in the month of Ramadhan because these are times to stop eating sehri or start if it is iftaar. It is a training process to do the same in other months with regard to salaa.

All this leads to the object of siyaam, which Allah says in the Qur'an - Taqwa. However, note that He says in the aya quoted at the beginning of the lecture - "...so that you MAY have taqwa..." There is no guarantee that one who observes siyaam will definitely have taqwa.



In fact, if one continues to backbite, slander, lie, harm others and not observe good akhlaq then there cannot be taqwa even if one observed siyaam for the whole year. The Prophet (pbuh) has said: "One who, whilst fasting, neither guards his tongue from telling lies, nor refrains from doing bad deeds, does not respect his sawm...Allah does not approve of mere refrain from food...When you fast you should not speak ill of anybody, nor should you be boisterous or noisy. If anybody speaks ill of you or tries to pick a quarrel with you, do not respond to him in the same manner, rather simply tell him that you are observing sawm."

In the sermon that the Prophet (pbuh) gave on the last day of Sha'ban to the Muslims regarding the month of Ramadhan. He said:

"O people! Indeed ahead of you is the blessed month of Allah. A month of blessing, mercy and forgiveness. A month, which to Allah is the best of months, its days the best of days, its nights the best of nights and its hours the best of hours.

It is the month, which invites you to be the guests of Allah, and invites you to be one of those near to Him.

Each breath you take glorifies Him; your sleep is worship, your deeds are accepted and your duas are answered.

So, ask Allah, your Lord; to give you a sound body and an enlightened heart so you may be able to fast and recite his book, for only he is unhappy who is devoid of Allah's forgiveness during this great month.

Remember the hunger and thirst of the day of Qiyama with your hunger and thirst; give alms to the needy and the poor, honour your old, show kindness to the young ones, maintain relations with your blood relations, guard your tongue, close your eyes to that which is not permissible for your sight, close your ears to that which is



forbidden to hear, show compassion to the orphans of the people so compassion may be shown to your orphans.

Repent to Allah for your sins, and raise your hands in Dua during these times, for they are the best of times and Allah looks towards His creatures with kindness, replying to them during these hours and granting their needs if He is asked....

O people! Indeed your souls are dependent on your deeds, free it with Istighfar (repentance); lighten its load by long sujud; and know that Allah swears by His Might :

That there is no punishment for the one who prays and prostrates and he shall have no fear of the fire on the day when man stands before the Lord of the worlds.

O people! One who gives Iftar to a fasting person during this month will be like one who has freed someone and his past sins will be forgiven.

Some of the people who were there then asked the Prophet (pbuh) "All of us are not able to invite those who are fasting?"

The Prophet (pbuh) replied: "Allah gives this reward even if the Iftar is a drink of water".

One who has good morals (Akhlaq) during this month will be able to pass the 'Siraat'... on the day that feet will slip...

One who covers the fault of others will benefit in that Allah will curb His anger on the day of Judgement...

As for one who honours an orphan; Allah will honour him on the day of Judgement and for the one who spreads his kindness, Allah will spread His mercy over him on the day of Judgement.

As for the one who cuts ties of relation; Allah will cut His mercy from him....



Whoever performs a mustahab salaa in this month; Allah will keep the fire of hell away from him.

Whoever performs a wajib prayer; Allah will reward him with seventy prayers in this month.

And whoever prays a lot during this month will have his load lightened on the day of accounts.

He who recites one aya of the holy Qur'an will be given the rewards of reciting the whole Qur'an during other months.

O people! Indeed in this month the doors of Janna are open, therefore ask Allah not to close them for you; The doors of Jahannam are closed, so ask Allah to keep them closed for you.

During this month Shaytan is imprisoned, so ask your Lord not to let him have power over you."

Imam Ali (pbuh) says that I stood up and asked:

"O Prophet! What are the best deeds during this month?"

The Prophet (pbuh) replied:

"Stopping oneself from doing those deeds which are forbidden by Allah..."

So we learn that in this very special month, although we should spend more time reciting the Qur'an, raising our hands in dua, and making sure we serve others, the most important part of the month of Ramadhan is to make an extra effort to keep away from all that is haraam. Remember, it is the little sins that we forget the most.

Two men came to Imam Ja'fer As-Sadiq (pbuh) and said that they would like to do Tawba (ask for forgiveness and put right) for their sins. The first man said that he had done a lot of small sins whilst the second said that he had committed two big sins.

Imam told the first man to pick one small pebble for each small sin that he had committed. He told the second man to bring a large boulder for each of his big sins. After a while both men came back to



Imam having brought what they were asked to bring. Imam now asked both of them to put back every stone in its place. The man with the two large boulders found it difficult to carry them back in their original place but eventually he managed. The man with the many small pebbles could not remember where he had picked all of them so he could not put them all back in their original place. It is very difficult to do tawba for the sins which seem small because we forget and take them for granted.

Imam Ali (pbuh) has said:

"The biggest sin is that which the doer considers the smallest."



DAY 2 - TAQWA

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Baqara, aya 183 says:

“O you who believe! Siyaam has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you so that you may have taqwa.”

No matter how accomplished we may be, no matter how happy or wealthy or talented, at some point in our lives we find ourselves seeking a deeper meaning in life. This meaning can only be found in spiritual strength, which is achieved through taqwa.

So what is taqwa? As it is connected to the nafs, we must first briefly understand what the nafs or soul or spirit is?

Have you ever experienced a sacred peaceful moment maybe during salaa, or when dua or majalis is read, or maybe when you first saw the Ka'ba or entered a masjid - when despite the constant humdrum of life, you felt a profound sense of awe and belonging? That is the nafs expressing deep satisfaction with its connection to Allah.

The nafs is what we are in essence. In a book for example, the words are the body of the book whilst the ideas behind them are the nafs of the book.

Taqwa means to unite the body and the nafs, to be able to fulfil all the wajibaats and keep away from all the muharrimaat. It is taqwa, which strengthens a person's spiritual power. It is like a vaccine through which a person is immunised from the germs of sins and evil, which weaken one's nafs.

Now let us ask ourselves how taqwa is achieved through the siyaam of the month of Ramadhan? Well! Let's first look at the origins of the name of the month - Ramadhan.

The root word for Ramadhan is ramadha, of the means to burn due to excessive sun-heat reflected on the desert sands. The ramdha is



the burning rock. This is why it was called the month of Ramadhan. It is also said that it was called the month of Ramadhan because people become ramadh due to their suffering from the combination of hunger and thirst during a very hot month. Arab linguists say that to make something ramadh is to squeeze it between two soft rocks then to pound it. A person keeping sawm, by analogy, pounds his own nature between two rocks: hunger and thirst.

The Prophet (pbuh) has said:

"The month of Ramadhan was named so because it tends to ramadh the sins, that is, burn them."

During the lifetime of the Prophet (pbuh) the month of Ramadhan also used to be called Al-Marzooq - the one full of sustenance, due to the abundance of the blessings of Allah in it.

The siyaam of the month of Ramadhan provide an annual spiritual programme. Whilst keeping siyaam we refrain from 10 things from dawn to sunset for a whole month. Amongst these things are those like eating and drinking, which are normally lawful and allowed. Refraining from the things which are normally allowed trains a person to have a control over his nafs so that when during the following 11 months he is tempted in doing something haraam, he has a greater strength to keep away.

Having realised that it is taqwa that we need to gain spiritual strength and ultimately through that a deeper meaning to life and peace within our nafs. How then do we go about it?

Firstly we must recognise, acknowledge and accept totally that Allah is far higher than our limited selves. Because we as human beings are self serving by nature, this acknowledgment requires a degree of humility.

Then we must accept that the nafs reaches out to and comes from a much higher spiritual place and in order to nourish it we need to familiarise ourselves with the wisdom and laws of it's Creator. That



is to be able to know the day-to-day laws of Sharia' that relate to our lives. It is not enough just to educate ourselves about these laws but we must actualise them - that is put them to practice. For instance, we are told that Salaa is the me'raj of a mu'min that is the ladder that connects the nafs to Allah, Sawm is that which converges the body to the nafs but if the siyaam of the month of Ramadhan do not make one muttaqee then they are merely days of starvation and thirst.

Spiritual strength can only be obtained from Siyaam if we are consciously aware of its purpose and aim - to gain taqwa.

The spiritual programme can be enhanced by simple deeds as mentioned in the sermon of the Prophet (pbuh) about the month of Ramadhan. Deeds like helping a neighbour in need, listening to a stranger in distress, provide food and clothing to someone who cannot afford it. Will we spend a month of siyaam only to find that at the end of the day nothing has changed within ourselves or within society?

So next time you look into the mirror, ask yourself -

What have I before me? I recognise my body but do I detect the nafs within it? I know my bodily needs and try to keep it away from pain and harm but do I do the same for my nafs?

We all have the potential to get close to Allah - In Suratul Hujurat He says:

"...Indeed the most honorable of you with Allah is the one with taqwa...."

All we need to do is to recognise and tap the potential of our nafs. You see, it is like a bird and its wings. Imagine if a bird was unaware that its' wings enabled it to fly; they would only add an extra burden of weight. But once it flaps its wings, it lifts itself skywards. We all have wings - our nafs - that can lift us as high as we need and wish to go. All we have to do is learn to use them.



DAY 3 - FOOD AND DRINK

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Baqara, aya 172 says:

“ O you who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided you with, and give thanks to Allah if it is Him that you serve (do ibada of).”

Have you ever seen a young child who has just found out that he has fingers and toes? There is a sense of wonder and discovery. As we grow up the wonder ceases and we take our body for granted. Many people today are health conscious, for we have realised that being healthy makes us feel better and be more productive. More important, a healthy body allows us to concentrate on our nafs. Physical fitness is not optional; it is part of our responsibility to Allah. On the other hand, worshipping the body is unacceptable. The body is the vehicle for the nafs - that is it's value; it is not an end unto itself.

Eating and drinking are the basic necessities of sustaining the body and it is important that we eat and drink 'good' food and drink.

So who determines which food is 'good' for us? Common sense tells us that it is Allah - our Creator who would know what is 'good'. The criterion therefore is laid down by Sharia'.

Some general rule regarding food:

The food must be obtained by lawful means. It is forbidden to eat any food, which is obtained by stealing, and deceit.

It must be halal, which means permitted, and not haram.

For instance, fish with scales and all vegetables are allowed.

Alcoholic drinks, wine, beer and all drugs, which affect the brain, are forbidden.



There are restrictions on meat. The meats, which are haram, are - all products from the pig, animals that eat other animals or excrement for food, animals and birds that died naturally. Animals, which are strangled or stunned to death and animals killed for food without being slaughtered in the Islamic way (zabeeha).

There are four essential conditions laid down by Sharia for the slaughter of animals:

1. The person who slaughters the animal must be a Muslim.
2. The name of Allah must be pronounced before the incision is made and the animal to face qibla.
3. The instrument used must be sharp.
4. The incision should be made in the neck cutting the throat and esophagus, the jugular vein and the carotid artery without cutting the spinal cord.

Besides these it is highly recommended that the knife must not be sharpened in front of the animal, animals should not be slaughtered in front of each other, they should be given water before they are slaughtered and the animal should be laid on its side, soothed and stroked gently on its back.

There are many mustahabaat, which are recommended in relation to food and drink.

One should not eat when the stomach is full. Imam Ali (pbuh) has said:

"Do not extend your hand to food unless you are really hungry and stop eating before you are full..."

"Being always full gives rises to various diseases".

Hazrat Luqman said to his son:

"My son! When the stomach of a person is full his/her faculty of thinking goes to sleep and his/her tongue of wisdom becomes dumb and his/her limbs fail to worship Allah".



Imam Ja'fer As-Sadiq (pbuh) has said:

“The human being has to eat but it is necessary that he should apportion one third of his stomach to food, one third for water and one third for air.”

- It is recommended not to eat between breakfast and dinner.
- The Prophet (pbuh) also said: “Not eating dinner causes ageing.”
- Washing one’s hands before and after meals is mustahab. It is makruh to eat alone.
- It is highly recommended to do wudhoo before and after eating food. The Prophet (pbuh) has said: “Performing wudhoo before and after eating meals ensures the wellbeing of the body and increases sustenance.”
- When the Prophet (pbuh) used to invite guests for a meal, he would start first and end last so that all his guests felt comfortable and none remained hungry.

A hadith regarding food and drink, associated with the month of Ramadhan.

The Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have said:

“Indeed Allah sends His mercy upon those who eat sehri (the pre-dawn meal)”

The Prophet (pbuh) also said: “Even if there is no food for sehri, then eat one date or a drink of water.”

We usually start our iftaar with dates. Dates are instant energy and have a high nutritional value. They are also recommended as an antidote against stomach bugs.

Dates have been mentioned in the Qur’an.

In Suratu Maryam - Aya 25 and 26, Allah says:



"And shake towards you the trunk of the palm tree, it will drop on you dates - fresh and ripe; So eat and drink and refresh the eye..."

When Sayyida Maryam felt the birth of Prophet Isa (pbuh) approaching, she rested upon the trunk of a dead palm tree. As she leaned against the trunk, lonely and in pain, it suddenly became green spreading new leaves and bearing ripe fruit.

A voice told her to shake the palm tree and eat of the dates, which would refresh her making her feel better.

The Prophet (pbuh) used to have a light sehri and a light iftaar. If all of us ate only one less mouthful of food in the month of Ramadhan and ensured that it was transported to those who needed it, there would not be single hungry person on the earth. We must start with ourselves - So next time you go to buy food or drink, think! Can I do without some of this and send the money to those more needy for only then are we worthy of calling our fasts siyaam.



DAY 4 - GUESTS

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Baqara, aya 172 says:

"O you who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided you with, and give thanks to Allah if it is Him that you serve (do ibada of)."

The aya of Qur'an says that we should give thanks to Allah. Besides saying Ahamdulillah and Shukr lillah, how else can we demonstrate our shukr?

One of the ways is to be able to share our food and drink with others. The Prophet (pbuh) in his sermon about the month of Ramadhan said:

'O people! One who gives iftaar to a fasting person during this month will be like one who has freed someone and his/her past sins will be forgiven.'

Some of the people who were there then asked the Prophet (pbuh) *"All of us are not able to invite those who are fasting!"*

The Prophet (pbuh) replied:

"Allah gives this reward even if the iftaar is a drink of water."

The Prophet (pbuh) has also said:

"When Allah wishes to do good to a family He sends them a gift. That gift is a guest who brings his/her sustenance with him and carries away with him the sins of the family."

"A guest is a guide who leads one to the path to Janna."

A father and son were once the guests of Imam Ali (pbuh). Imam made them comfortable and sat opposite them talking to them. It was time for the meal to be served.

After food had been served and eaten, Imam's servant Qambar brought a basin and a jug of water for the guests to wash their hands.



Imam took the jug himself and asked the father to extend his hands so he could pour the water.

The guest said:

"How can it be that my Imam serves me! It should be the other way?"

Imam Ali (pbuh) replied:

"Here is your brother in Islam, eager to serve his brother and earn the pleasure of Allah. Why do you prevent it?"

The guest extended his hands.

Imam told him:

"Wash your hands thoroughly. Do not hurry thinking that I should be free of this duty quickly."

When it was the son's turn to wash his hands Imam told his son Muhammad Hanafiyya to hold the jug and wash the sons' hands.

Imam then told him:

"I washed your fathers' hands. My son washed your hands. If your father had not been my guest today, I would have washed your hands myself. But Allah loves to see that when a father and son are present in a place, the father enjoys a privilege and a priority."

It is easy to share when we feel there is abundance but many of us find it hard to do so when there is little to go round. A Muslim however rises beyond this – There was an incident from the battle of Moota where after the battle there were a number of the companions of the Prophet (pbuh) who lay mortally wounded on the ground.

They were all thirsty and groaning for water.

A man seeing them took some water and offered it to the first companion who pointed to a second companion saying he needed the water more.

The man went to the second mujahid who pointed to the third companion saying that he needed the water more than him.



When the man got to the third mujahid he found that he had already died.

He returned to the second mujahid but he too had died and so had the first companion.

All the soldiers wanted to share with the others so much so that they were prepared to give to the other before themselves.

The Prophet (pbuh) has said that there are five acts which bring the blessings of Allah on a person:

Greeting each other with Salaamun 'alaykum. The initiating of Salaam is mustahab yet carries more thawab than the reply, which is wajib. It is so important that even if one is praying salaa and is greeted by someone with salaam, he must reply likewise.

1. Reciting Adhan loudly at home before every salaa. The Prophet (pbuh) has said that the voices of those who recite adhan loudly are carried to the heavens and the angels in the heaven stop to listen.
2. Keeping clean and being tahir all the time. It is said that on the day of Qiyama, Jahannam will reject people who are sent to it simply because they were clean and taahir in the world.
3. The recitation of Qur'an every day. It increases one's memory and intelligence. Try to recite just 10 ayaat after salaa loudly.
4. Inviting a guest to share meals. It is said that Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh) never ate alone. He would wait in the streets inviting people to come home and share his meals with him. Let us take this opportunity in the month of Ramadhan, which in itself is a month of blessings where we are the guests of Allah to increase the blessings by sharing what we have with others.



DAY 5 - WILAYA OF IMAM ALI (PBUH) FROM AHLUS SUNNA SOURCES

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratut Tawba, aya 119 says:

“O you who believe! Have taqwa with Allah and be with the truthful ones”

Abdullah ibn Masud (A companion of the Prophet (pbuh) used to be one of the scribes of the Prophet (pbuh) and used to be one of those who recited Qur'an to the Prophet (pbuh). The Prophet (pbuh) wept whenever Abdullah recited the Qur'an and told him “O Abdullah! If people really undertood the Qur'an they would weep at every aya”. When Abdullah used to recite the aya 9:119, the Prophet (pbuh) asked him if he knew what was the meaning of truthful in this aya? The Prophet (pbuh) explained that it was one who was absolutely truthful and did not even lie in jest.

Fakhruddin Razi (a mufasssireen of the Ahlul Sunnah) writes in Tafsir e Kabeer that this aya is a constant reminder to me that there will be a 'saadiq' on the day of judgement and that there is one in every era. One who is ma'sum.

Within all the Muslims, the beliefs of Allah, Prophet hood, Ka'ba, Qibla & the Qur'an are common; so where lies the difference? Probably the principal factor that separates Shias from the Ahlus Sunna majority is the question of succession to the Prophet (pbuh). The question is not only on who was the successor but also the role of this successor, for it is on both these points that Shias and Sunnis disagree.

In order to understand the Imama of Imam Ali (pbuh) it is necessary to return to the beginning of Islamic history.

In Taarikh At-Tabari Vol.I pg.1172-3 (An Ahlus Sunna source) it is written that when the Prophet (pbuh) first made the public announcement of his Prophet hood at *Dawatul 'Ashira* he asked:



*"...And which of you will assist me in this cause and become my brother, my trustee and my successor among you?"....
And they all held back from this while I (Imam Ali (pbuh) said, "I, Prophet of Allah, will be your helper in this matter." And he (The Prophet) put his arms around my neck and said: "This is my brother, my trustee, and my successor among you, so listen to him and obey."*

In Tirmidhi Sunan, Vol.2 pg.299 (another Ahlus Sunna source) it is reported that in Madina, when the Prophet (pbuh) decreed that each Muslim should become the brother of another Muslim (Brotherhood between Ansar & Muhajir), he singled out Imam Ali (pbuh) to be his brother saying:
"You are my brother in this world and the next."

In the battles of Badr & Khayber, Imam Ali (pbuh) was appointed the standard bearer. At Khayber, the following is related in an Ahlus Sunna collection of Ahadith - Sahih Muslim Vol.2 pg. 324

"The messenger of Allah said on the day of Khayber: "I shall certainly give this banner (Standard) to a man who loves Allah and his messenger and through whom Allah will give victory." Umar ibn Khattab said: 'I never wished for leadership except on that day.'" And he also said:" And so I leapt up towards it hoping to claim it as a right." And the messenger of Allah summoned Ali ibn Abu Talib and gave it to him saying: "Go! And do not turn aside until Allah gives you victory."

When the Prophet left to go on his longest expedition to Tabuk, he left Imam Ali (pbuh) behind in Madina to be in charge. There were rumours in Madina that Ali (pbuh) was left behind because he would bring bad luck to the Prophet (pbuh). The Prophet (pbuh) on finding out, told Imam Ali (pbuh): *...Are you not content to be with*



regard to me as Harun was with Musa; except that after me there shall be no other Prophet."

This has been reported in the Musnad of Ibn Hambal Vol.1 pg.170, 173, 174-5, 179...and in Sahih Muslim Vol.2 pg. 323-4 (4 ahadith)

The event of Mubahila which is mentioned in the Qur'an in Suratu Aali Imran - Aya 61 where the Prophet (pbuh) took Imam Ali (pbuh), Sayyida Fatima (pbuh) and Imamayn Hasanayn (pbuh).

Sunni Ahadith describes these as being the four people under the Prophet's cloak (Ahlul Kisaa) for whom *aya tatheer* (33:33) was also revealed. This is reported in both Sahih Muslim Vol.2. pg. 323-4 and Tirmidhi Sunan Vol.2 pg. 300, 308, 320

Towards the end of the year 9 AH when Suratul Bara'a (Tawba) was revealed, Abu Bakr was sent to read it to the people of Makka. The Prophet (pbuh) sent Imam Ali (pbuh) after him asking him to return. The sura was then given to Imam Ali (pbuh) to take and read out to the people of Makka. When the Prophet (pbuh) was asked regarding this he said:

"Jibrail came to me and said: Do not let it (the reading of the sura) be done by anyone other than yourself or someone from you (your Ahlulbayt) on your behalf."

This has been reported in the Musnad of Ibn Hambal Vol.1 pg.3 pg.151

Finally, on returning from the farewell Hajj, the Prophet stopped at Ghadeer and amongst other things took Imam Ali's hand and said to the people:

"Do you not acknowledge that I have a greater claim on the believers than they have on themselves?" And they replied: *"Yes!"* And he raised Ali's hand and said: *"Of whomsoever I am mawla, then Ali is also his mawla." O Allah! Be the supporter of whoever supports Ali and the enemy of whosoever opposes him."* And Umar met him (Ali) after this and said to him *"Congratulations! O son of*



Abu Talib! Now morning and evening (forever) you are the mawla of every believing man and woman."

This particular hadith has been reported in many many works of both the Shia' and the Ahlus Sunna. Some of their sources are the Musnad of Ibn Hambal Vol.4 pg.281, Vol.1 pg.84, 118,119,152,331 and the Sunan of Ibn Maja Vol.1 Bab II pg.43 No 116

We, as Shias believe that the Prophet (pbuh) built up religion to its perfection. For a perfect religion, however, there is a necessity for guardianship, someone who would ensure that it is maintained that way.

The Prophet (pbuh) had three choices:

Not to appoint a successor, to describe the necessary qualifications of a successor or to name one by Allah's will.

The ahadith just quoted proves beyond any doubt that in the life time of the Prophet (pbuh), he made it clear that the successor after him would be Imam Ali (pbuh).



DAY 6 - WUDHOO, SALAA, TURBAT

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratut Tawba, aya 119 says:

"O you who believe! Have taqwa with Allah and be with the truthful ones"

There are five major different schools of thought in Islam - Shafii, Hambali, Maliki, Hanafi and Imamiyyah or Tashayyu (Shia').

All Muslims believe in Allah, Prophethood, the Ka'ba, Qibla & the Qur'an. Besides the difference in the question of succession to the Prophet (pbuh), there are various issues of fiqh in which the five schools differ.

Some of these practises and their explanations are given below:

With regard to the way to perform wudhoo, the Qur'an says in Suratul Mai'da, aya 6:

"O you who believe, when you prepare for prayer, wash your face and your hands along with your elbows and wipe a part of your head and wipe a part of your feet and ankles."

It is in compliance with this aya that we wash our face and hands and wipe (do masah) of our head and feet.

Unlike other Muslims, Shias combine Dhuhr/'Asr and Maghrib/Isha prayers. Like all Muslims we believe that there are 5 prayers but they may be prayed in 3 periods of time as stated in the Qur'an in Suratut Bani Israil, Aya 78:

"Establish salaa at the decline of the sun, and at the darkness of night and the recitation of dawn..." and again in Suratut Hud, Aya 114

"Establish salaa at the 2 ends of the day and at the beginning of the night..."



All the schools of thought may combine salaa when there is fear or rain or journey. Hajj is a prime example where all pray Dhuhr/Asr together on the day of Arafat.

There are 13 traditions in the Sahih Sitta (the books of ahadith used by the Ahlus Sunna) where the Holy Prophet (pbuh) joined the prayers in the absence of fear, rain or journey.

In the recitation of Adhan we mention Imam Ali's (pbuh) name. We do not believe it to be a part of Adhan or Iqama but we recite it for grace and blessings of Allah.

Another practise attributed to Shias is the performing of sajda on muhr or turbat. Sunni & Shia both have Ahadith recommending sajda on pure earth, which includes dust, stone, grass etc. All things that grow from the earth can be used provided that they are not eaten or worn. Thus we keep tablets of clay handy.

In Saheeh Bukhari, Vol 1. pg 79 a hadith states:
“The Prophet used to rest his forehead on the earth whilst doing sajda”

Despite these differences we must remember that we are one Umma as mentioned in the Qur'an.



DAY 7 - ZAKAA IN RUKOO AND EVENTS OF SAQIFA

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Mai'da, aya 55 says:

“Indeed, your wali is only Allah and His messenger and those who believe - those who establish salaa and pay the zakaa whilst in rukoo.

All Muslim scholars agree that this aya was revealed in honour of Imam Ali (pbuh).

Wila, Wilaya. Wali, mawla - The original meaning of all these words comes from the root word - *waliya*. It is used to describe nearness, closeness, special or spiritual affinity, obedience, mastership and authority.

In the aya just quoted *wilaya* refers to obedience with love. It clearly shows that there are only 3 awliyaa (plural of wali) of those who believe:

1. Allah
2. His Prophet (pbuh) - Nabuwwa
3. Imam Ali (pbuh) - Imama

Abu Dharr Ghifari says that one day he was praying with the Prophet (pbuh) in Masjidun Nabi when a beggar came to the masjid. Everyone was praying and no-one responded to his pleas for help. The beggar raised his hands and said: “O Allah! Bear witness that I came to Your Prophet’s masjid and no one gave me anything.”

Imam Ali (pbuh) was in rukoo. He stretched his hand towards the beggar and pointed out his little finger on which was a ring. The beggar came forward and took the ring.

The Prophet (pbuh) raised his face towards the heavens in dua: “Ya Rabbi! My brother - Prophet Musa (pbuh) begged to You to expand for him his breast, make his work easy for him and loosen



the knot on his tongue so that people might understand him, and to appoint from amongst his relations his brother as his wazir and to strengthen his back with Harun and to make Harun his partner in work (Suratu Taha 20:25-30).

“Ya Allah! You said to Musa: ‘We will strengthen your arm with your brother ...’ O Allah! I am MuhammadExpand my breast for me, make my work easy for me and from my family appoint my brother Ali as my wazir. Strengthen my back with him.”

The Prophet (pbuh) had not yet finished his dua when Jibrail brought the revelation of aya 55 of Suratul Mai’da.

So what happened after the wafat of the Prophet (pbuh)? Why did the majority of Muslims not follow the orders of the Prophet (pbuh) in the wilaya of Imam Ali (pbuh)?

Central to this whole issue is what happened at the Saqifa (a meeting place), which is in broad terms agreed by both the Sunni and the Shia writers.

When the Prophet (pbuh) died, Imam Ali (pbuh), Sayyida Fatima Zahra (pbuh) and others were preparing for the burial of the Prophet. Unbeknown to them, two other groups were gathering in the city.

One group consisted of Abu Bakr, Umar, Abu Ubayda and other prominent Makkans (The Muhajirs) and the other group was the prominent members of Madina (The Ansars). The second group was gathered at Saqifa.

The Muhajir claimed that they had a greater right to the Khilafat because they had been Muslims for longer and had supported the Prophet (pbuh) in Makka when he had very few friends. They also claimed to be his relations and said that they had migrated from



their homes in Makka in very difficult circumstances, leaving behind all their wealth and property.

The Ansar insisted that they had a greater right to the Khilafat because they had given the Prophet (pbuh) shelter in Madina. They had also protected him in his time of need and had fought at his side in battles against powerful enemies. They recalled how for 13 years he had preached amongst the Makkans and only a handful had become Muslims. They argued that it was the Ansar who had given Islam.

When Umar and Abu Bakr reached Saqifa, the arguments had almost been settled in favour of the Ansar, who had chosen Sa'd bin Ubada to lead the Muslims. Umar did not find this acceptable at all as he had already planned to bring in a man from the Muhajir. He urged Abu Bakr to make a speech and turn the situation. Abu Bakr rose and said that the Arabs would not accept any Khalifa who was not from the Quraysh. He also praised the merits of the Ansar to keep them quiet. The Ansar were not fooled by the clever words of Abu Bakr and while there was some silence, Abu Bakr received help from an unexpected quarter.

The two main tribes of the Ansar were the Aws and Khazraj. The old enmity between them had been settled long ago by the Prophet (pbuh), but now it came out into the open. To stop the selection of Sa'd bin Ubada who was the chief of the Khazraj, Bashir bin Sa'd from the tribe of Aws suddenly went forward and gave his allegiance to Abu Bakr. He was followed by three other men from Aws. Suddenly, the Muhajir had the upper hand.

Despite protests from the tribe of Khazraj and a few followers of Imam Ali (pbuh), Abu Bakr was elected as the first khalifa. The rest of the people followed like sheep, too weak or uncaring to protest. The few who did raise their voices to defend the unrecognised rights of Imam Ali (pbuh) were ignored and outnumbered.



Later, Abu Bakr sent Umar to Sayyida Fatima's (pbuh) house, where Imam Ali (pbuh) and some friends had gathered. Umar had instructions to bring Imam Ali (pbuh) to Abu Bakr to pay the oath of allegiance to him. When Imam Ali (pbuh) refused to do this, Umar threatened to burn down the house. Imam Ali (pbuh) then came out. From the open door was heard the sound of Sayyida Fatima (pbuh) weeping. On hearing her the companions of Umar could not keep themselves from weeping and turned back.

However Umar was bent on humiliating Imam Ali (pbuh). He insisted that Imam Ali (pbuh) be led to the mosque tied with a rope so that he could not escape. It was a measure of the patience of Imam Ali (pbuh) that he did not use force in the interests of Islam. He knew that nothing could be gained by fighting, and a civil war would destroy the Muslims.

When Imam Ali (pbuh) was brought in front of Abu Bakr, Umar insisted that if he did not give the oath of allegiance, he should be killed. Imam Ali (pbuh) refused and Abu Bakr did not force the issue saying he would not harm the husband of Sayyida Fatima (pbuh) whilst she was still alive.

After that Imam Ali (pbuh) was released and he went directly to the grave of the Holy Prophet (pbuh)



DAY 8 - KHILAFAT OF IMAM ALI (PBUH)

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Mai'da, aya 55 says:

“Indeed, your wali is only Allah and His messenger and those who believe - those who establish salaah and pay the zakaah whilst in rukoo.

Let us look at events that occurred after the wafat of the Prophet (pbuh) in the Muslim Umma.

The first khalifa was selected through the vote of the majority of the companions. The second khalifa was appointed by the will and testament of the first. The third by a six-man council, whose members and rules of procedure were organized and determined by the second khalifa. Altogether, the policy of these three khalifas, who were in power for twenty-five years, was to execute and apply Islamic laws and principles in society in accordance with Ijtihad and what appeared as most wise at the time to the khalifas themselves.

The khilafat of Imam Ali (pbuh) began toward the end of the year 35 AH and lasted for about four years and nine months. Imam followed the ways of the Prophet and brought conditions back to their original state.

On his first day as khalifa, in an address to the people, Imam said: “O People, be aware that the difficulties which you faced during the period of the Prophet of God have come upon you once again and has seized you. Your ranks must be turned completely around so that the people of virtue who have fallen behind should come forward and those who had come to the front without being worthy should fall behind. There is both truth (Haqq) and falsehood (Batil). Each has its followers; but a person should follow only the truth. If falsehood be prevalent it is not something new, and if the truth is



rare and hard to come by, sometimes even that which is rare wins the day so that there is hope of advance...”

Those, whose interests were at risk basing their actions on the claim that they wanted to revenge the death of Uthman, instigated bloody wars, which continued throughout almost all the time that Imam was Khalifa.

During the four years and nine months of his khalifat, Imam was not able to eliminate the disturbed conditions which were prevailing throughout the Islamic world, but he was successful in three fundamental ways:

As a result of his justice and upright manner of living he revealed once again the beauty and attractiveness of the way of life of the Prophet (pbuh), especially to the younger generation. In contrast to the pomp of Muawiyah, he lived in simplicity and poverty like the poorest of people.

He never favored his friends or relatives and family above all others, nor did he ever prefer wealth to poverty or brute force to weakness.

Despite the time consuming and strenuous difficulties, which absorbed his time, he left behind among the Islamic community a valuable treasury of knowledge.

Nearly eleven thousand of his proverbs and short sayings on different intellectual, religious and social subjects have been recorded. In his talks and speeches he expounded the most sublime Islamic sciences in a most elegant and flowing manner. Nahjul Balagha compiled by Syed Radhi is a record of these sermons and sayings.

He established the Arabic grammar and laid the basis for Arabic literature. Abu Aswad Al-Dua'li of Basrah relates that he went to



Imam and found him engaged in deep thinking, on enquiring what was troubling him, Imam replied:

“I have heard people in this town of yours make grammatical errors in their speech. I am going to prepare a book on the rules governing the Arabic language.”

Abu Aswad says that after three days Imam handed him a book, which began:

“In the name of Allah, the Kind, the Merciful.

A word is a noun, a verb or a particle. A noun denotes a name, a verb denotes a movement, and a particle is a word that denotes a meaning which is neither a noun nor a verb...”

Imam asked him to pursue this direction (nahw) of thinking. As a result this area of study came to be known as Ilm Al-Nahw.

He trained a large number of religious scholars and among them men like Uways Qarani, Kumayl ibn Ziyad, Maytham e Tammar and Rushaid e Hajari. These men have all been recognized by the later Sufis as the founders of gnosis (irfaan) in Islam. Others among his disciples became the first teachers of fiqh, theology, Qur’anic commentary and recitations.



DAY 9 - PRODUCTIVE WORK

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Hashr, aya 18 says:

“O you who believe, have taqwa and let every nafs consider what it has sent on for tomorrow, and have taqwa; Indeed Allah is aware of what you do.”

We work hard in our day-to-day life, carrying on with the normal drudgery of life but have hardly ever stopped to consider the deeper significance of all this work?

When we take a closer look at work and productivity in the Qur'an, Allah says that every human being has been created to toil. A human being cannot be satisfied unless he is productive. But if we were created to toil, why do we crave for holidays?

Well! We are made up of a body and a nafs and although the nafs does not get tired it is the body, which by nature needs to rest.

Why did Allah create us so that our contentment is related to work? Would we not be more thankful to Him if He gave us everything we needed with no effort?

The answer is that through work, we become contributors and developers of the world and the aakhira.

Work is not something that we do just to make enough money in order to surround ourselves with material comforts. Work is that with which we transform our material world into a more Godly place. We should be able to transform each act or deed of ours into an act of Ibada which we can send ahead.

How do we do this?

In order to achieve this, firstly we must ensure that our niyya for every act is connected to Allah, that means that ultimately it is to get closer to Allah - Qurbatan Ilallah. Not only in salaa, sawm, hajj, khums, zakat, etc. but also in day to day acts. For example, if I were to eat it is to gain energy so that I can serve Allah. If I were to play sports it is to become physically fit in order to serve Allah...



Initially it might seem that such a strong commitment to Allah will be distractive but the exact opposite is true. At every salaa focus back at your goal - the bottom line must say Allah only.

A businessman once complained of how there was no baraka in his business no matter how hard he worked. "Are you up to date with your Khums and do you contribute to khayriaat from your profits?" the 'aalim asked. The businessman looked down and shook his head. "Well!" said the 'aalim: "Make Allah your partner by settling your Khums and contributing a percentage of your profits to charity. Allah like any good business partner will then do everything in His power to ensure that the business succeeds." Imam Ali (pbuh) has said: "When you find that there is a decrease in income, then do business with Allah."

By making our niyya for every act - Qurbatan Ilallah we are inviting Allah into the arena.

Next, as the aya above says, the act must be sandwiched with taqwa - that means that the wajibaat must be fulfilled and the muharramaat kept away from. For instance in a game of football, I must ensure there is no foul play, no bullying, no instance where I have hurt someone's feelings. I must ensure that I put 100% into my game and observe good sportsmanship.

Finally, we must fully concentrate on the work at hand. When we dedicate something to Allah, there is should be no shoddiness, or half-heartedness.

Habil and Qabil were the sons of Prophet Adam (pbuh). Habil was a good son and Prophet Adam (pbuh) chose him to be his successor. Qabil did not like that and argued with his father. Prophet Adam (pbuh) asked them both to offer a sacrifice to Allah. Whoever's sacrifice is accepted would be his successor.



Habil used to look after sheep and brought his best sheep as a sacrifice whilst Qabil, who was a farmer only brought some withered ears of corn.

Allah accepted the sacrifice of Habil.

Qabil was so jealous of his brother that he said to him:

“I will certainly kill you!”

Habil replied:

“If you stretch out your hand to kill me, I will not stretch out my hand to kill you, because I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds.”

Qabil killed Habil but did not know what to do with his brother’s body.

Allah sent two crows to show him. One killed the other and then buried the dead body. Qabil learnt what to do from the crows and buried his brother’s body.

When we comply with these three conditions in every work - niyya (Qurbatan Ilallah), compliance to the rules of Sharia’ and total concentration in the job at hand, it becomes an act of ibada which is what we send ahead for tomorrow (for our aakhirah).

You see, our whole life is compiled of countless acts, some necessary for day-to-day living, some not. If we were to make a list of the things we did today it might be - waking up, visiting the bathroom, doing wudhoo, praying salaa, dressing, having breakfast, going to work/school...and so on. Year after year we find an accumulation of millions of fragments. We may have the greatest of aspirations to accomplish great things but with a life full of little things we simply find no room. We need to find a thread that binds every aspect of life sewing them all together. The thread is the mission that Allah asks us to fulfil - to be His abd. Every moment of life is sanctified for ever act is united towards one goal.

Finally, at the end of every day, as you prepare to sleep, review the day and how you used its opportunities, considering what you sent



forwards for tomorrow (the aakhira). Recognise that Allah has put us on the Earth for a purpose and all our activities must express that purpose. Go to sleep with the intention that no matter how good, or not so good, today was; tomorrow will be better Insha'Allah.



DAY 10 - SADAQA, WAFAT OF SAYYIDA KHADIJA (PBUH)

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Hashr, aya 18 says:

"O you who believe, have taqwa and let every nafs consider what it has sent on for tomorrow, and have taqwa; Indeed Allah is aware of what you do."

One of the deeds that we do for tomorrow (the aakhira), is sadaqa or alms giving. We all know that sadaqa is considered a virtue and it has become a fabric of our societies.

The key to sadaqa lies in understanding that it is not only a gift to the receiver but to the giver as well. Sadaqa is one of the simplest yet most profound ways to help refine the material world and unite with other human beings and Allah.

The best sadaqa is that which is given in secret for the Prophet (pbuh) has said it is that which puts out the flame of Allah's anger.

The Prophet (pbuh) has also said:

"On the day of Qiyama everyone will rest under the shadow of his/her sadaqa until the matters are settled between the people."

He has also said:

"Sadaqa reaches the hand of the Creator before it reaches the one you give it to."

Imam Ali Zaynul Aabideen (pbuh) was once walking with his companions when they saw a faqeer. Imam gave him whatever he had and kissed his hand calling the faqeer his muhsin (one who has done ihsaan, in other words one who did him a favour). As they walked away, Imam's companions inquired as to why Imam had kissed his hand and called him his muhsin. "You are his muhsin" they said for you gave. Imam explained that was not one who took



his money, multiplied it manifold times and deposited it with Allah a muhsin?

Imam Musa Al-Kadhim (pbuh) has said:

"Beware of refusing to give sadaqā and then spending twice as much in disobeying Allah."

Imam Ja'fer As-Sadiq (pbuh) has said that if one gives sadaqa early in the morning he is saved from all the difficulties which descend in the daytime whilst sadaqa given at the end of the day will keep away all difficulties which descend at night

Sadaqa can be a smile, a good deed, an act of kindness, but of the many forms of sadaqa, the most powerful is monetary. It is because we invest so much time, energy and labour into earning money that it represents the energy of life. So contributing money to sadaqa expresses the deepest form of giving and refining this physical world which is self orientated by nature. The power of sadaqa is such that it does not allow one to become immersed in self interest.

Sayyida Fatima Zahra (pbuh) could not bear to see her two young sons Hasan and Husayn (pbuh) ill. She made a vow with Allah to fast for three days. With her the whole family fasted.

On the first day when they were about to break their fast, there was a knock on the door. It was a poor man who was hungry. All the family gave up their bread to the man and broke their fast with water.

Similarly on the next two days, an orphan and a prisoner came who were hungry. The family gave away their food.

Allah revealed Suratud Dahr in honour of their sadaqa. The criteria for sadaqa is taught by the family of Fatima Zahra (pbuh) and her family in this sura in ayaat 9 and 10:

"We feed you only for Allah's sake, we want no reward nor thanks for it. We fear from our Lord a difficult day of distress (Qiyama).."



Her mother too, was the first muhsina of Islam, giving all she had in the way of Allah.

Sayyida Khadija's father was a merchant like most of the tribe of Quraysh in Makka. He sent caravans to other cities to trade in the summer and winter. Her mother and father both died within 10 years of each other. Their wealth was divided amongst the children but it was Sayyida Khadija who took over the family business and expanded it. With the profit she made she helped the poor, widows, orphans, sick and the disabled people of Makka.

She had a cousin called Waraqa bin Naufal who was a very learned man and who was not an idol worshipper. Both Waraqa and Sayyida Khadija believed in one God.

Because of her excellent Akhlaq the Arabs (who at that time used to look down upon women) called her Tahira - the pure one. She was also known as the 'princess of Makka' because of her wealth. A lot of Arab nobles and princes wanted to marry her but she refused all of them.

In 595 AD Sayyida Khadija was looking for someone to be in charge of her caravan to Syria. Abu Talib suggested the Prophet to her. She had heard of his trustworthiness and agreed to employ him although he did not have much trading experience. To help him she sent her slave Maysara. The trading caravan was a great success and when Sayyida Khadija heard of the Prophet's skills and excellent conduct she became his admirer.

Soon it was arranged for Sayyida Khadija to be married to the Prophet (pbuh) Abu Talib read the Nikah on behalf of the Prophet whilst Waraqa read it for Sayyida Khadija. Abu Talib paid the *mehr* for his nephew and fed the people of Makka for 3 days in celebration. Sayyida Khadija too fed the people. The marriage was a very happy one and their first child was a son called Qasim. The



second was Abdullah. Both died in infancy. Their third and last child was Sayyida Fatima Zahra (pbuh)

When the Prophet used to go to meditate in the cave of Hira on Jabal An-Noor it was Sayyida Khadija herself who would climb up there to give him his food and necessities. Sayyida Khadija was the first person to accept Islam as taught by the Prophet (pbuh)

In 616 AD the Quraysh isolated the Bani Hashim (the family of the Prophet) and they took refuge in a ravine called *Shib e' Abu Talib*. Sayyida Khadija was there too and it was her wealth (which she had donated for Islam) that sustained the Muslims at that time. The siege lasted for 3 years during which time they experienced hunger, thirst, and the cold and heat of the desert.

In 619 AD Sayyida Khadija died. The Prophet (pbuh) had lost not only his wife and a friend, but a partner in the cause of Islam.



DAY 11 - BASIC DETAILS OF THE QUR'AN, EXPLANATION OF BISMILLAH...

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Hujurat, Aya 2 says:

'O you who believe! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, and do not speak loudly to him as you speak to one another, lest your deed become null whilst you do not realise.'

When this aya was revealed, a man who was hard of hearing stopped attending the masjid of Madina. When the Prophet (pbuh) enquired about his whereabouts he was told that the man was worried as he spoke loudly because of his disability and it would contravene the aya that was revealed. The Prophet (pbuh) went to visit him and explained that the aya was not for those like him who spoke loudly through no fault of their own.

It is this sort of obedience that we need to apply to our lives in relation to the Qur'an.

We live in a world where there is a great gulf between what people think and what they do. We constantly see that behaviour does not reflect belief, or at least what we profess to believe. We believe that the Qur'an with the ahadith of the ma'sumeen are guidance for ourselves yet we have a segregation in our knowledge and action which is not acceptable.

We demand consistency from everything around us yet we tolerate inconsistency in our own attitude towards the Qur'an in particular. We do not make full use of this miracle that is granted to us paying it only lip service. Imam Ali (pbuh) in nahjul Balagha says that there will come a time when

"Nothing will remain of it (the Qur'an) except it's name"

In other words we will not respond to the Qur'an.



Let us make some resolutions in this month of the Qur'an to study and act on the Qur'an. What makes the difference is not how many times we have been through the Qur'an but how many times the Qur'an has been through us. Take one aya and ponder over its meaning.

It is said that sins will keep you away from the Qur'an or the Qur'an will keep you away from sins.

Often we find that many of us worry about the ayaat of Qur'an which we do not understand when really to start with we should be troubled by the ayaat we do understand and how much we follow of them if that.

Let us start with the aya that we recite day in and day out before we start anything -

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

"I begin in the name of Allah, the Kind, the Merciful."

What is the purpose of commanding human beings to begin every act in the name of Allah? The operative word here is name. When we wear name brands for instance we do that for a purpose - to be able to gain standing in a society where these names are recognised. A baby, for instance is named after someone whom one is fond of respected, thus reviving the memory of the name.

Shaheed Murtaza Mutahhari in his book 'Understanding the Qur'an' explains the reason why we begin in the name of Allah.

He says, "It is for the purpose of giving that act a sacred touch and making it blessed. When a human being who has a natural sentiment from Allah and considers Him a holy essence and a source of all Grace, begins an act in His name, it means that owing to His sanctity, nobility and greatness, the action to becomes sacred."

Taking this into consideration, would we say Bismillah.... before we abused someone or stretched out our hands to steal?



Another question that might come to mind when reciting

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

is what is the difference between Rahman and Raheem. Shaheed Murtaza Mutahhari writes:

“The word Rahman denotes excess and therefore...Rahman means that Allah’s mercy spreads everywhere and covers everything. ...The mercy of Allah has no exception... It comprises the whole world....It is the extension of blessings to all existence while they exist, but many things are perishable
The word Raheem denotes stability....with it’s sense of stability and eternity it applies only to those who through their faith and good deeds have placed themselves in the path of Allah’s particular blessings. So Allah’s mercy is both universal and specific.”

We have only scratched the surface of studying the first aya of the Qur’an. Ponder over it again and again. Study the names of Allah which are found in the Qur’an thinking of how we can apply them into our lives every time you say

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Let us now look at some basic details about the Qur’an. We will start of with an from the Qur’an describing itself.

In Suratun Nahl, aya 89, Allah says:

“..We have revealed to you the book which clarifies every matter...”

Imam Ja’fer As-Sadiq (pbuh) has said:

"The Qur'an is living, its message never dies. It turns like the turn of day and night, it is in motion like the sun and moon. It will embrace the last of us, the way it embraced the first of us "

The Qur'an is that which was revealed as the Final message of Allah to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) during the last 23 years of his life. Every Prophet is granted the power to perform miracles in order to



verify the truth of his message. The Qur'an is a standing and continuous miracle for all times and places. It is a living miracle.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) lived amongst the Arabs who were experts in language and literature and the Qur'an challenged them at their own art.

There are over 6000 ayaat in the Qur'an in 114 suwer. An aya means various things - a sign, miracle, wonder...

Suwer and ayaat are either Makki or Madani according to their place of revelation - Makka or Madina. Makki suwer mainly describe the basic faith whilst Madani deal with the rules for the code of life like salaa, sawm, zaka and khums...This division is not absolute because a Makkan sura may contain some Madinite ayaat and vice versa. e.g. Suratul Anfal revealed in Madina has ayaat 30 -40 revealed in Makka.

For convenience of reading the Qur'an has been divided into 30 equal parts called a Juz whose plural is Ajzaa without disturbing the original divisions formed by the ayaat and suwer to enable completion of reading in one month.

The Qur'an is also divided into seven equal sections - Manzil - it's plural being Manazil to enable the reader to complete the recitation on one week if so desired. This is written at the bottom of each page.

There are four wajib sajadat in the Qur'an which on hearing or reciting one must perform a sajda. It is not necessary to face qibla, or be in wudhoo.



DAY 12 - RECITATION AND STUDY OF THE QUR'AN

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Anfaal, Aya 24 says:

“O you who believe! Answer the call of Allah and His messenger when they call you so that you may be given life; and know that Allah intervenes between a human being and his/her heart, and that to Him shall you be gathered.”

The Qur'an is Allah talking to us whilst dua is our conversation with him. In order to be given life - in other words to awaken and enliven our nafs we need to respond to the Qur'an.

So, how are we to respond to it?

Firstly we must acknowledge that the Qur'an is a road map provided by Allah which illuminates the many winding dark paths of the world. It gives us an insight to see beyond the physical world. But like any road map we must know how to read it and understand it.

Therefore, firstly we must learn to recite the Qur'an correctly. That in itself without any understanding holds great reward.

Imam Ja'fer As-Sadiq (pbuh) has said:

“What stops one amongst you who has been busy in the day when he returns home to recite one sura before he sleeps? For every aya that he recites, ten good deeds are recorded and ten bad deeds erased...”

“It is your duty to recite the Qur'an because stages of Janna are in accordance with the number of ayaat of the Qur'an. On the day of Qiyama a reciter of the Qur'an will be told: Recite and ascend, and the more he recites the higher the ascension.”

One Ishaq bin Ammar asked Imam As-Sadiq (pbuh):

“May my life be sacrificed for you. I have memorised the Qur'an. Is it more excellent for me to read from memory or shall I look at the text?”



Imam replied:

Recite whilst looking at the text for it is more excellent. Don't you know that even looking at the text of the Qur'an is a form of ibada?"

Imam continued: *"The one who reads the Qur'an from the text is gratifying his/her eyes, and bringing ease to his/her parents even if they are unbelievers."*

In the month of Ramadhan, the reward for recitation is increased manifold as the Prophet (pbuh) mentions in his sermon about the month:

"...He who recites one aya of the holy Qur'an will be given the rewards of reciting the whole Qur'an during other months..."

The next step is to look at the translation and with the help of tafseer try and understand an aya at a time.

Ideally, endeavour to learn Arabic at some stage of your life for a translation of any other book - for example the Bible is still called the Bible but when a Qur'an is translated, it is called a translation of the Qur'an and not the Qur'an.

Let us not lull ourselves into thinking that it is not necessary to learn how to recite the Arabic text and that it is enough to know and understand the translation.

The Prophet (pbuh) said to his companion Ma'adh:

"If you are eager for the life of the lucky ones. Desire the death of martyrs, wish for salvation on the day of Qiyama, want guidance when lost, then start the study of the Qur'an. This is because the Qur'an is the word of Allah, that which saves you from Shaytan and helpful in increasing good deeds."

Using a concordance, find all the ayaat that start with 'O you who believe!...' Taking one at a time, see if you can apply them in your life.... Ponder over each one and tell yourself - Allah is addressing



me and asking me to do something...Am I following the instructions or not?

Find out more about the Qur'an. How was it revealed? Is it only a book of instructions? What does it say about the Ahlulbayt? Does it mention space travel? Maybe you could look up all the Qur'anic duas or all the names of Allah - The scope is endless and so with it the boost of life to the nafs.

Imam Ja'fer As-Sadiq (pbuh) has said:

"It is for a believer that he should not die but in a state of either learning the Qur'an or teaching it."

We are told that Sayyida Fizza who lived with Sayyida Fatima (pbuh) and her family in latter life only conversed with the ayaat of Qur'an. How many can we quote? Give yourself an achievable target for next year making sure it is ayaat that you can recite, understand and act upon.

Studying the Qur'an is not a passive act. It does not mean information transfer - rather it must reflect in our day to day living. It is a power that touches one's nafs.

By opening our minds to the Qur'an, we create closeness between ourselves and Allah, which is the goal that we are put on earth to achieve. Our perspective of the world begins to change and we begin to see the 'light' within the 'container'. We recognise that every object and act has a greater divine purpose than merely the fulfilment of our needs. For instance a table is there for studying, the lounge for having meaningful conversations, we eat for nourishing ourselves to serve Allah.....

And finally, we learn to be sensitive to Allah's grace. The recognition that everything from the falling of a leaf to the movement of the



galaxies is mentioned in the Qur'an. We look at life from inside out rather than from outside in.



DAY 13 - QUR'AN AND SCIENCE

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Anfaal, aya 24 says:

“O you who believe! Answer the call of Allah and His messenger when they call you so that you may be given life; and know that Allah intervenes between a human being and his/her heart, and that to Him shall you be gathered.”

We live in a highly scientific world and often we feel that the Qur'an or religion is an outdated concept and therefore response to it is difficult in this modern hi tech age. Then there are those who feel that science and technology have only brought corruption and evil and keep away from it as far as possible.

Let us first try and understand science and technology. Virtually every moment of our day has been affected by modern technology. It allows us to live more comfortably and work more efficiently. The computer age and information revolution has given us access to reach anyone, anywhere at any time.

Every advance and discovery in science reflects and parallels the truth of the Qur'an. Science is merely the human study of Allah's creation. It is the search to understand the laws that Allah installed to run the physical world.

So how can we apply the learning of science in our lives to bring us closer to Allah?

Firstly, we must accept that science on its own is morally neutral. It tries to give us an objective view of our universe and its forces but it does not draw conclusions as to how we should use these forces. A young student who had just learnt about atomic energy asked her teacher why governments would not ban such a destructive force. Her teacher replied: “Do you have a knife at home?” ‘Is the knife good or bad?’ The young student said: “Depends what you use it for,



if it is used to cut food it is good, but if it is used to hurt someone than it is bad!"

"The same" her teacher said "applies to atomic energy."

From atomic energy, for instance, we realise the power of every human being. We now know that even the smallest bit of matter can release a massive amount of energy, so too does every human being contain enormous power. How do we release it? By getting to the very core - to our nafs - and shaking it. It is the human equivalent of nuclear fusion - a human being will respond when he is acted upon by the proper combination of force and direction. This creates a chain reaction - just as the splitting of the first atom triggers others to split - every positive human action - a good deed - triggers a chain reaction. However, that is true with negative forces too. In the study of the atom we see that the various particles orbit around the nucleus, whilst in the human being, the nucleus is our nafs...

Every aspect of science brings us closer to Allah. The more we study, the more we realise the message of the oft repeated aya in Suratu Rahmaan:

"Which then of the bounties of your Rabb will you deny"

Let us look at some of the ayaat in the Qur'an which relate to the universe. Remember, that when the Qur'an was revealed some 1400 years ago science was in its infancy and many of the theories which are known today and are taken for granted were not even conceivable.

In Suratul Ambiya, aya 30, Allah says:

"Do not the unbelievers see that the heavens and earth were joined together as one unit of creation), before we split them asunder. We made from water every living thing - will they not then believe? "

Modern theories also say that originally the earth, planets and everything in space were part of a gaseous nebula or cloud which gradually separated.



All theories about the origin of life accept that the first life was created in water and all living cells have a high proportion of water.

In Suratus Sijda, ayaat 4 and 5, Allah says

"It is God who has created the heavens, and the earth and all between them in 6 periods of time and is firmly established on the throne (of authority). You have none besides Him to protect or intercede. Will you not then receive admonition? He rules from the heavens to the earth, in the end all will go up to Him on a day the space of which will be a thousand years of reckoning."

Geologically the earth's history dating from a gaseous nebula has been divided into 6 eras. Each era covers millions of years.

These eras are:

1. When the earth was in a gaseous stage.
2. When the earth had been created but there was no life on it.
3. When early life has developed.
4. When vegetable and vertebrae had been created.
5. When birds and four footed egg laying animals lived.
6. When mammals including man were created.

The fifth era is possibly when the dinosaurs whom we here so much about today lived.

In Suratu Taha, ayaat 105, 106 and 107, Allah says:

"They ask you concerning the mountains! Say: My Lord will uproot them and scatter them as dust, He will leave them as plains smooth and level, nothing curved or crooked will you see in their place."

The geologists know of hundreds of mountains of the past that no longer exist. They have been uprooted completely and scattered on the face of the earth. The Qur'an says that this will be the fate of all the mountains that we see today.



DAY 14 - SABR (PATIENCE)

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Baqara, aya 153 says:

“O you who believe! Seek help through sabr and salaa; Indeed Allah is with those who have sabr.”

The Prophet (pbuh) said:

“Sabr is of three kinds:

1. Sabr at the time of hardship.
2. Sabr in regard to obedience.
3. Sabr in regard to disobedience.

One who has sabr at times of hardship.... Allah writes for him 300 degrees (of elevation), the elevation of one degree over the other being like the distance between the earth and the heavens.

One who has sabr with regard to obedience, Allah writes for him 600 degrees (of elevation), the elevation of each degree above the other being like the distance between the earth's depth and the 'arsh (throne).

One who has sabr in regard to disobedience, Allah writes for him 900 degrees (of elevation), the elevation of each degree above the other being like the distance between the earth's depths and the furthest frontiers of the throne.”

The above hadith illustrates that sabr in regard to disobedience is superior to all other levels of sabr, for it not only possesses greater number of degrees but also the range between its degrees is greater than those of the other kinds.

In the battle of Uhud, Imam Ali (pbuh) was just 25 years old. He was newly wedded to Sayyida Fatima Zahra (pbuh) and Imam Hasan (pbuh) had just been born. They were a young family.

The Prophet (pbuh) asked Imam Ali (pbuh):

“How much sabr will you show in shahadat (martyrdom)?”



Imam Ali (pbuh) replied:

“Please do not speak of sabr; ask me instead how grateful will I be?”

Sabr in regard to hardship means to stop oneself from complaining about hidden suffering or pain. Pain is a lonely experience in essence but we must strive to recognise that our pain is in some form, Allah’s way of communicating with us. Having sabr is realising amidst the despair that it is suffering is a test that examines how consumed we are with material comfort as opposed to spiritual growth. Instead of being broken by hardship, we must demonstrate our complete trust in Allah by having sabr - continuing our life with an intense commitment to continue to serve Him - it turns the hardship around.

A man called Sama’ah ibn Mirhan was asked by Imam Ali Ridha (pbuh) what had stopped him from going to Hajj.

Sama’ah replied that he had fallen into debt and had lost his wealth. Imam said:

“If you have sabr, you will be the object of envy and if you do not Allah will enforce His qadr (decree) regardless of your pleasure or displeasure.”

Abu Hamza Thimali has reported it from Imam Ja’fer As-Sadiq (pbuh):

“Whoever of the mu’mineen has sabr when a hardship befalls him, has the reward of a thousand shuhada (martyrs).”

Sabr in regard to obedience means to perform the wajibaat correctly and to inwardly have khulus (sincerity) and presence of mind. This sabr is helped by remembering Allah’s promised reward for obedience, both immediate and to come. The highest reward being closeness to Him.

Sabr with regards to disobedience is realised outwardly by avoiding sins and keeping away from places where they might be committed. Inwardly, it is by preventing the nafs from inclining towards sins, for



the very beginning of a sin is a mere thought. Often we commit sins for fear of not being accepted by our peers. Think for a moment how empty that fear is. Human beings are fickle - their moods change, attitudes change and values change. By worrying about how others will feel, we are placing our nafs in the security of their hands. We must not compromise our values and standards of how others will perceive us. Often we are afraid of the fear itself. Remember, fear is in essence False Evidence Appearing Real.

This sort of sabr is one of the most difficult ones for we all want to be loved and accepted. The only person on earth one needs to be accepted by is oneself and that only happens when one conforms to the laws of Allah, which introduces sanctity and serenity into our lives.

Anyone who puts his/her hand in the fire knowingly only does so because he wishes to burn himself. It does not as a rule happen. Why do we avoid fire? Because our knowledge tells us it is dangerous and we are sure of this knowledge. In the same way those who strive to perfect their nafs, have yaqeen in the 'burning' power of sins and therefore avoid them.

It is said that sabr is the commander of the mu'min's defence against sins.

Imam Ja'fer As-Sadiq (pbuh) has said:

"When a mu'min enters his/her grave, salaa is on his/her right side, zakaah on the left. Righteousness faces him and sabr is his/her shelter. When the 2 angels charged with questioning him enter, sabr says to salaa, zakaah and righteousness - 'Take care of your companion, and if you fail to assist him, I will take care of him myself.'"

Finally, utilise the power of dua'.



In Suratul Baqara, aya 250:

“Our Rabb! Bestow on us sabr, make our feet steady, and help us against the disbelievers.”



DAY 15 - BIRTHDAYS, WILADAT OF IMAM HASAN (PBUH)

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Baqara, aya 153 says:

“O you who believe! Seek help through sabr and salaa; Indeed Allah is with those who have sabr.”

As we move ahead in our busy lives and grow older and further away from our own birth, few of us pause to appreciate just how miraculous that moment was. In order to fully understand ourselves we must return to our beginning.

For each of us, birth was not an accident. Allah chooses each of us to fulfil a particular mission in this world, just as pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Each is important and irreplaceable. Take away even one piece and the jigsaw is incomplete.

So how should we celebrate our birthdays? Besides the receiving of cards and gifts it is an occasion to rethink our lives. How big is the gap between what I have done and what I can do? Am I spending my time properly or am I involved in things that distract me from Allah? Is my nafs any stronger from last year?

There is no better way to celebrate our birthdays than what we do for our ma'sumeen. Gather with family and friends and arrange a majlis to learn something meaningful. Do a special act of goodness so that you are not only saying that you are thankful to Allah for the life He has given you but you are showing it. Make a resolution to make the next year better than the last, and use the occasion to prepare and draw up a plan of action.

Let us look at what we can learn from the life of Imam Hasan (pbuh) who was born on Tuesday the 15th of Ramadhan 3 A.H.



He was named by the Prophet (pbuh), the name came from Allah through Jibrail as Hasan). The Prophet said to Imam Ali (pbuh): *"O Ali! You are to me as Harun was to Musa. Prophet Harun had two sons called Shabbar and Shabbir. Shabbar translated in Arabic is Hasan"*.

He was the first grandson of the Prophet (pbuh). And on the news of the birth, the Prophet smiled showing all his teeth (One of the rare occasions of intense happiness for him).

On the 7th day 'Akeeka' was performed and it was the first 'Akeeka' in Islam. The Prophet arranged for a feast for the people of Madina.

He was born in a year when the battles of Islam were taking place and therefore opened his eyes in an environment of 'Jihad'.

He was the image of the Prophet and used to listen to his sermons intently and then relate all the sermons of the Prophet to his mother even at the age of 4-5 yrs. Once when Bibi Fatima (pbuh) mentioned it to Imam Ali (pbuh) he said he too wished to listen to his son. He came into the house once and sat where Imam Hasan (pbuh) would not see him. When Imam Hasan (pbuh) came and started relating to his mother what the Prophet had said he stammered and could not reiterate. He said to his mother: *"I feel the presence of my father in the house and cannot continue"*.

When the Prophet died Imam Hasan (pbuh) was 8-9yrs old. When Abu Bakr sat on the pulpit to give his first sermon, Imam entered the mosque and repeatedly told him "inzil" - get down from my father's place. Abu Bakr had to agree and said, "Yes! It is your father's place".

It was a traumatic childhood in which he saw the injustice done to his parents. (The door fell on Bibi Fatima (pbuh) leading to the death of Muhsin (pbuh); The taking away of Fadak and the dragging of Imam Ali (pbuh) through the streets of Madina with a noose



around his neck). It was all done to incite Imam Ali (pbuh) to unsheathe his sword and therefore give an excuse for the Caliphs to kill him.

Imam Hasan (pbuh) and Imam Husayn (pbuh) had an age difference of only one year and they grew up side by side with the same principles and goals.

Whenever Imam Hasan (pbuh) stood for wudhoo, he trembled and his face went pale. When asked why? He would say *"Don't you know I am standing in front of my Creator?"*

Whenever he was reciting Qur'an and came across an ayah beginning with "O you who believe..." He would immediately answer back "Labbaik, Allahumma Labbaik". (I am here, O Allah, I am here!!) People used to throng outside his house to hear him reciting Qur'an, so much so that the road would get blocked. Once when one of his servants spilt hot food over him, Imam recited aya 134 of Suratu Aali Imran where Allah says: *"And those who swallow anger... (Imam smiled - no anger) and forgive men... (Imam forgave him) and Allah loves the doers of good... (Imam freed him from slavery).*

A man from Syria came to Madina and started abusing Imam Ali (pbuh) Imam Hasan (pbuh) told him that as he (the man) had just arrived from a long journey he had better first eat and rest. He could talk later.

After that the man told Imam "I arrived in Madina as your worst enemy and now I am the best of your admirers through your character".

Hasan bin Yasar (Bashari) was a famous saint of Islam and a man of wisdom (21 AH -110 AH) saw Imam Ali (pbuh) to Imam Sadiq (pbuh)). He did not believe that man had free will. One day he had second thoughts and wrote to Imam Hasan (pbuh):



"Bismillahirrahmaanirraheem. O son of Hashim, O son of Ali, you are the ark of Nuh, whoever comes to it is saved and whoever leaves it is drowned. What do you say of man's actions? Are they controlled by Allah or by himself?"

Imam replied: *"O Hasan bin Yasar, remember! These hands, legs, tongue and body are given to you by Allah. He equips you and makes you their custodian to use the equipment for its proper particular use".*

Allah is the proprietor and man the lease holder. He gave his whole household contents twice in the way of Allah.

Imam Hasan (pbuh) in his youth saw in the rule of the first three Khalifas a constant attempt to remove the 'rights' of his father. Khums was now paid to the Khalifas. Those who knew Imam Ali (pbuh) were sent away to Rome, Palestine and Iran to fight wars. The Khalifas were continually trying to make sure that no one in Madina knew of Imam Ali's bravery and his rights.

When Imam Ali (pbuh) assumed khilafat in 34 AH the battles of Jamal, Siffeen and Nahrwan were fought. Imam Hasan (pbuh) was the flag bearer in all these battles and played an important part in the victories. For example: before the battle of Siffeen the people of Basra were against Imam Ali (pbuh). Imam Ali (pbuh) sent Imam Hasan (pbuh) to Basra and within a few days a great proportion fought on Imam Ali's side.

On the 21st of Ramadhan 40AH Imam Ali (pbuh) was martyred. Imam Hasan (pbuh) and Imam Husayn (pbuh) buried him and straight after went to Masjid e Kufa before they went home. Here Imam Hasan (pbuh) gave his first sermon after his father's death. Abdullah bin Abbas stood up and did bay'at (promised to follow and obey him as leader) after which all those present rushed to him and did bay'at.



However, when Imam asked them to perform Jihad, they left his company and preferred Muawiya's promise of wealth. Muawiya sent all the letters received by him from Imam's supporters for Imam to see (4 - 5 camel loads).

Muawiya declared independence. Imam seeing the 'colour' of his so-called supporters gave a sermon telling them that those who had changed sides to go to Muawiya would regret it and their supplications to Allah would never be accepted. Muawiya initiated a treaty but Imam stipulated the conditions. There was no question of compromise of Khilafat or Imamate as these were ordained by Allah.

Imam Hasan (pbuh) signed an agreement with Muawiya where Muawiya promised to follow the Qur'an and the sunna (way) of the Prophet (pbuh) and not to harass the followers of Imam Ali (pbuh). Imam Hasan (pbuh) gained time through the treaty to do *tableegh*. He also used the time to prepare companions to help Imam Husayn (pbuh) when the time came.

The treaty also proved the disbelief of Muawiya. He cursed Imam Ali (pbuh) and his family when the Prophet had said "*He who curses Ali (pbuh) has cursed me. He who has cursed me has professed kufr*". Muawiya therefore professed his kufr openly.

Muawiya tried to poison Imam several times eventually succeeding through Imam's wife Jo'da. She was promised Muawiya's sons hand in marriage and money.

Jo'da put the poison in Imam's water at night. He died 3-4 days later on the 7th Safar 50 A.H.



DAY 16 - SALAA

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Baqara, aya 153 says:

"O you who believe! Seek help through sabr and salaa; Indeed Allah is with those who have sabr."

"Nothing rubs the nose of Shaytan upon dust like Salaa, so perform Salaa and rub the nose of Shaytan upon dust."

Salaa is not merely a few minutes of rituals but that which concentrates our attention on the hereafter and Qiyama thus refraining one from evil. Salaa is a cure for anxiety, distress and fear.

It is the support of the whole Muslim Umma (community). Each and every day on hearing the Adhan, Muslims assemble to pray salaa. On Friday, whole communities, villages and towns gather for Salaatul Jumu'a, likewise during Hajj Muslims from all over the world gather together for salaa.

Salaa is the me'raaj (ascension) of the mu'min.

Salaa is like a factory, which produces human beings. It draws out the corruption and evil from a nation by working through each individual.

Imam Ali (pbuh) has said:

"If he who offers salaa knew how much grace Allah bestows upon him during the salaa, he would never lift his head from sajda."

To be able to attain the benefits of salaa it must be recited correctly and with full presence of mind. Just like a watch which is only useful if it shows the correct time. It would still look like a watch if it did not work but would not serve its purpose.



All attention must be on salaa and on the dhikr - lines of remembrance that it contains. When standing for salaa the heart must be free from everything else.

Having placed oneself before Allah, the Lord of the worlds, address Him, praise Him, confide in Him, and implore to Him

It befits one who prays salaa to be in a state of humility, dignified, in clean and tidy clothes, with scent and having cleaned his/her teeth and combed his/her hair.

Remembrance of Allah must be taught to the heart just like when one teaches words to a child stressing each one in order to get the child to repeat them. When one remembers Allah with the tongue, and is occupied with training the heart, the outside helps the inside just as the heart of a child opens through the tongue.

Imam Hasan Al-Askery (pbuh) has said that one of the signs of a mu'min/a is that he prays 51 rakaats of salaa daily. This includes the wajib salawaat (17 rakats), the nafila salawaat (23 rakats) and Salatush Shab (11 rakats).

Salatush Shab is also known as Salatul Layl meaning the *prayers of night* and Salatut Tahajjud meaning *prayers of keeping awake at night*.

So important is Salatul Layl that the Prophet (pbuh) said to Imam Ali (pbuh) three times: '*Alayka Bisalatil Layl* ' which means '*On you the prayers of night* ' - in other words '*It is incumbent on you the prayers of night*'.

The specific timing for praying Salatul Layl starts from midnight upto the time for praying Salatul Fajr. However, the best time to pray is just before Salatul Fajr.



In Suratu Bani Israil, aya 79, Allah says:

"And (in a part) of the night, pray tahajjud in addition to (what is wajib on you), maybe (through that) your Lord will raise you to a praised position."

A hadith from Imam Ja'fer As-Sadiq (pbuh) lists the benefits of Salatul Layl as told to Imam Ali (pbuh) by the Prophet (pbuh). Some of them are that it is a means of gaining Allah's pleasure. The angels keep friends with one who prays Salatul Layl. Shaytan keeps away and it is a safety from enemies. One's good deeds and duas are accepted and one's livelihood increased. In the grave it provides light, comfortable bedding, companionship, and helps answer the questions of Munkar and Nakeer. On the day of Qiyama it will provide shelter and act as a barrier against the fire of Jahannam. It is also the key to Janna.

What better month than the month of Ramadhan to recite Saltul Layl especially in the nights of Qadr.



DAY 17 - EIMAN AND REASON , VICTORY OF THE BATTLE OF BADR

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Baqara, aya 153 says:

“O you who believe! Seek help through sabr and salaa; Indeed Allah is with those who have sabr.”

The aya is directed at those who have eiman (faith). Human beings have many strengths at their disposal. We have a brain to process information, emotion that moves us and intuition that guides us. We also have sensory tool of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. So where does eiman fit in?

Sometimes we do not see eiman as a human strength but more as an absence of reason. Others say it is a sign of weakness, something to resort to when everything else fails. How many times have we resorted to dua when everything else failed? In earlier days it was said eiman was a necessity because human beings had not advanced enough in science to explain the laws of nature. The truth is we are all born with eiman. It is not acquired or taught, it is our most natural state. Eiman is a powerful positive force in our lives that recognises truth.

So why do many people deny eiman?

Look at a child - tell him that the tooth fairy takes away his/her tooth and leaves some money. He will believe it totally. As he gets older, he accepts less and less at face value? Does it mean he is losing faith? No, only that his/her faith is obscured with reason - not only that but he realises that his/her faith has been constantly abused. After years of experiencing hypocrisy he learns to distrust his/her own inner voice and learns to use his reason alone to process ideas and establish values.



We must learn to cultivate our eiman. We cannot allow reason to drown that nafsul lawwama which constantly tries to balance things within us.

Two people were invited to meet the king. One was a wealthy educated man whilst the other an illiterate peasant. The rich man arrived first and entered the palace walking through corridors filled with rare works of art. He got so engrossed in them that he missed his appointment with the king. The peasant arrived later and walked right through straight to the king. He spent all his time with the king.

This does not mean that we have to rely on faith alone. It must be joined with reason.

He was in pain. The hakeem (doctor) watched Prophet Musa (pbuh) climb up the mount Sinai and realised he was in pain.

“O Prophet of Allah! I can give you some medicine for your stomach ache” he said. Prophet Musa (pbuh) said he was going to Allah, The Healer As-Shafi, who would cure him.

Prophet Musa (pbuh) complained to Allah of his ailment. He was told that there was medicine for the pain that he was offered but had refused. Allah told his Prophet that both ‘dawa’ and ‘dua’ were required. Both medicine and prayer were necessary. On his way down the mountain, Prophet Musa (pbuh) asked the hakeem for the medicine he had offered.

The battle of Badr, which was won by a small band of Muslims against a large army of Kuffar* on the 17 of the month of Ramadhan, is a perfect example of the fusion of eiman and reason. There was both planning of strategies and strength in eiman that gave victory.

It was the first of the great battles of Islam.



When the Prophet heard the news that there was a trade caravan going to Syria from Makka under the leadership of Abu Sufyan he sent two men to gather information about it. It was discovered that it was a large caravan in which all the Makkans had shares. The Quraysh had decided to put all their savings into it and use the profits on arms, horses and other items of war to use against the Muslims.

The news was disturbing. The Prophet (pbuh) left Madina with 313 men, 2 horses and 70 camels to go to Badr, which was a stopping point for the caravans. The Quraysh had confiscated all the property of all the Muslims who had left Makka for Madina and the Prophet therefore decided to confiscate the property of the caravan in compensation.

Abu Sufyan feared an attack from the Muslims and sent a messenger to Makka telling them of his fears. On receiving the message, an army of 1000 men, 100 horses and 700 camels under the leadership of Abu Jahl left Makka to go to Badr. Meanwhile Abu Sufyan took a different route back to Makka avoiding Badr. Once he was back in Makka he called Abu Jahl back but Abu Jahl was too proud and wanted to crush the Muslims with his large army.

The two armies met at Badr on the 17 of the month of Ramadhan 2 AH

In the beginning as per Arab custom, single combat (one to one) took place. The famous Quraysh warriors Utbah, Shayba and Walid came to challenge three 'Ansars' from Madina. The Quraysh refused to fight any of the 'Ansars', demanding their 'equals' and so the Prophet (pbuh) sent Ubayda, Hamza and Imam Ali (pbuh). The three Kuffar* were killed (Ubayda was hurt). The Quraysh got disturbed and began attacking en masse.



In the thick of the battle the Prophet prayed to Allah. In Surat ul Anfal Allah gave the answer in aya 8 and 9

"When you asked for help from your Lord, He answered you. Indeed I will aid you with a thousand of the angels in rows after rows".

In Suratu Aali Imran, aya 22, He says:

"And indeed Allah assisted you at Badr when you were weak, so be careful (to your duty) to Allah so that you may be of the thankful ones. When you said to the believers 'Does it not suffice you that your Lord should assist you with three thousand angels sent down.'"

The enemies got frightened and began to retreat. The skill of Imam Ali (pbuh), the other Muslim soldiers and the sight of so many angels struck terror in the enemies' hearts.

70 Kuffar* were killed including their leader Abu Jahl. Imam Ali (pbuh) killed 36 of them. 14 Muslims were martyred.

The Muslims took 70 prisoners, who were treated with kindness. Some became Muslims. In later days some of the prisoners said: *"Blessed be the men of Madina, they made us ride whilst they walked, they gave us wheat and bread to eat when there was little of it contenting themselves with plain dates".*

The rich prisoners paid ransom and were set free. Others were asked to gain their freedom by teaching 10 Muslims to read and write.

The battle of Badr strengthened the faith of the Muslims.

*** The Kuffar specifically refers to the Quraysh of Makka, who were defiantly opposed to the Prophet (pbuh).**



DAY 18 - TAWBA

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratut Tahreem, aya 8 says:

“O you who believe, do tawba to Allah with a sincere turning, maybe your Rabb will remove from you your evil and cause you to enter gardens beneath which river flow...”

Tawba is an internal revolution of the human being against the self. Plants and animals do not act against themselves, yet the human being has the ability to do so. The rise of one group of human beings against another is a natural and obvious matter since we expect the oppressed to rise against the oppressor, but the rise of a person against the self is not so simple and obvious.

Why does it happen?

The reason is that in spite of having one body, a human being is intellectually and spiritually a complex being. He is a mixture of angelic and satanic qualities.

Tawba is the arising of the noble qualities within against ones own mean and wicked aspects putting an end to their domination and destroying all their force.

Once upon a time in a far away land, lived a king who was very wise and benevolent and cared deeply for his subjects and his country. After many years, he was blessed with a son who by definition became the prince. The king loved his son very much and prayed that the prince would be everything that not only the king and his subjects but also God expected of him.

But this was not to be a fairy tale. As the prince grew to be a man, he became everything that his father abhorred and he brought shame and disgrace to the king's household. The king tried everything in order to guide his son but even a king as great as this after having taken a horse to water could not make him drink. There



came a time when the king had no choice but to banish his son from his kingdom and he issued a royal decree that the prince was no longer a prince.

Three days later the king bade farewell to his son for the last time and turned his face away. The prince began to ride to the edge of the kingdom, and for the last time bent down to drink water from a river in his father's kingdom.

For one brief moment there was remorse in the prince's heart for after all he was his father's son -

"I am sorry" he whispered, "What I did was wrong!"

Because this is a fairy story, the king heard this and got off his throne and bridled his horse. The prince continued - *"I am very sorry!*

Father - I will not repeat these mistakes". On hearing this, the king summoned his soldiers to accompany him to find his son.

The prince rectified the physical damage he had done and spiritually atoned for his sins. For every day of gluttony he fasted, for every night he had spent in pleasure he engaged in prayer.

The king caught up with his son just as he was about to leave the kingdom and said that out of all the lessons that he had taught his son - remorse was the most important and it was the one that his son had learnt the best. The prince was re appointed to his former station and resumed his destiny to be the king.

We called tawba a reaction - when you throw a ball down it rebounds. Throwing it is an action and the rebound is its reaction. How high the ball rebounds depends on 2 things - firstly the intensity of the action namely the sin - if it is small the reaction will be small and if it is great the reaction will be great; so the more unjust a person is and the bigger his crime, the more intense will be his reaction.

The second factor on which the intensity of the reaction of tawba depends is the nature of the person's conscience and the strength of his faith - that is why even small blunders which may hardly be called sins rouse the conscience of those who are spiritually firm



and strong, while most of us may commit hundreds of these blunders without worrying about them.

We have a misconception that asking for forgiveness means tawba. However, tawba is the turning of us towards God but more importantly of God towards us, for in the story the king did not need the prince but the prince needed the king to fulfil his destiny.

Our destiny will be determined in the nights of Laylatul Qadr and very much like the prince we will have to take the first step in order for a hundred to be taken towards us.

Imam Ali (pbuh) is reported to have said in a hadith quoted in Usulul Kaafi - in the chapter of Tawba in the book of Eiman wal Kufr -
“If I were to say - I am sorry my Rabb, God will instruct the recording angels to forget that which they have written of my sins.
If I was to say - I am sorry my Rabb, I will not repeat this offence; God will instruct parts of my body to conceal my sins.
If I were to rectify the consequence of my actions, God will instruct the earth to conceal the sins that I committed over it.
And if I were to spiritually atone in like then when I meet God there would be nothing to give witness against me regarding any sin.”

Imam Ali Zaynul Aabideen (pbuh) in Dua Tawba says:

“.... Accept my tawba as You have promised and pardon my evil deeds as You have guaranteed and grant me Your love as you have laid down and you have my agreement, my Rabb - that I will never return to what You dislike and my guarantee that I will not go back to what you disapprove and my promise that I will give up all acts of disobedience to You.”

A hadith from the ma'sumeen states that when all eyes will be crying on the day of Qiyama there will be two sets of eyes, which



will not cry. Those that cried in tawba for their sins and those that kept awake at night in ibada.

The nights of Qadr are said to be any of the odd nights in the last ten days of the month of Ramadhan. Let us use the opportunity to sincerely turn to Allah in tawba and start afresh.

We are also told that it is far better to do dua, to ask from Allah together in a gathering (in a majlis) for when He accepts from a gathering, He does not pick and choose but accepts from all. It also helps for each of us encourages the other.



DAY 19 - DISEASES OF THE NAFS, SMALL SINS, TAWBA, SHAB E ZARBAT - IMAM ALI (PBUH)

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratut Tahreem, aya 8 says:

“O you who believe, do tawba to Allah with a sincere turning, maybe your Rabb will remove from you your evil and cause you to enter gardens beneath which river flow...”

A man asked Imam Musa Al-Kadhim (pbuh):

“Against which enemy is jihad more wajib?”

Imam replied:

“The enemy which is nearest to you, the one who does you the most harm, and whose enmity is the greatest, and that which with it’s closeness to you is the one most hidden from you...”

Imam was pointing to the hidden enemies within all of us - the diseases of our nafs. A human being has a nafs and a physical body, each of which is subject to its own pleasures and diseases. What harms the body is sickness, and that which gives it pleasure lies in its good health and whatever is in harmony with its nature. The science that deals with the health and the diseases of the body is the science of medicine.

The diseases of the nafs are evil habits and submissions to desires, which degrade man down to the level of animals. The pleasures of the nafs are moral and ethical virtues, which raise man and move him closer to perfection and wisdom bringing him close to Allah. The study that deals with such matters is the science of akhlaq.

The most hidden of these diseases are those that we regard as little sins. Imam Musa Al-Kadhim (pbuh) said to his companion Hisham: *“O Hisham! Prophet Isa (pbuh) said to his disciples - “And the small sins are amongst the deceit of Shaytan. He makes them insignificant for you and belittles them in your eyes. So those sins get*



accumulated and multiplied and plenty in number thus surrounding you."

Imam Ali Zaynul Aabedeen (pbuh) has said:

"And the sins which cause the non-acceptance of dua are: Evil intentions, evil thoughts, hypocrisy with mu'mineen, disbelieving that dua will be answered, delaying salaah till their time has passed, abandoning nearness of Allah through kindness and sadaqa and abusing and using obscene language in conversation."

The nights of Qadr are said to be any of the odd nights in the last ten days of the month of Ramadhan.

The Prophet (pbuh) has said:

"Allah has favoured Friday over all other days, the month of Ramadhan over all other months, and Laylatul Qadr over all other nights."

This name was used for Laylatul Qadr because Allah determines in it for everyone all what will happen the entire next year. The "Qadr" in this sense means destiny. According to al- Qummi's Tafsir, as explained on p.432 of its second volume, such destiny includes life and death, sustenance, abundance of crops or famine and everything good or bad. This means that Allah determines in this night each and every event to occur during the next year to any and all of His creation.

Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (pbuh) has said:

"Whoever spends Laylatul Qadr in ibada to his/her Rabb will have all his/her sins forgiven even if they had numbered as many as the stars in the heavens, the weight of the mountains, or the measures of the seas."

Besides being one of the possible nights of Qadr the 19 of the month of Ramadhan is a very sad day for us. It is the anniversary of



the day when Imam Ali (pbuh) was fatally wounded by the blow of a poisonous sword by one Abdur Rahman Ibn Muljim (May Allah withdraw His Mercy from him.)

The events that led to this tragic event.

After the battle of Nahrwaan, some of the remaining enemies, the Khaarijis had gone to find safety in Makka. The Khaariji were those who believed that all believers are of equal standing and none can exercise authority over another. They made their creed with "Laa Hukm Illa Allah" (No judgement but Allah's alone). They believed there should be no leader (Imam or Khalifa) and no allegiance should be given to a human being.

They were formed after the battle of Siffeen where they blamed Imam Ali (pbuh) for succumbing to human judgement and giving the enemy (Muawiya) a chance to recover. Imam Ali (pbuh) pointed out to them that the sin lay with them for it was they who refused to continue fighting against Muawiya when they saw the Qur'an on spears and he had no choice but to call back Malike Ashtar who was on the verge of gaining complete victory. Furthermore it was they, who had compelled Imam to accept an arbitrator. To this they admitted guilt and said they had repented and he should do the same. Imam said that he had committed no sin on his part.

The Kharijis who had fled to Makka, wanted to avenge their dead who had fallen at Nahrwaan and planned to assassinate Imam Ali(pbuh), Muawiya and Amr bin A'as.

The boldest three from them volunteered:-

1. Abdur Rahman bin Muljim, to kill Imam Ali (pbuh)
2. Burk bin Abdullah, to kill Muawiya.
3. Amr bin Bakr, to kill Amr bin A'as.

They chose Friday the 19th of Ramadhan 40 AH for their killings, swearing that they would accomplish their mission or perish.



Burk bin Abdullah, on reaching Damascus on the appointed day managed to stab Muawiya but his sword slipped and Muawiya was only injured. Burk was caught, tortured and killed.

Amr bin Bakr in Egypt went to kill Amr bin A'as but on that day Amr did not come to the Mosque and had sent his deputy to lead the prayers. The deputy was killed and so was Amr bin Bakr.

Abdur Rahman bin Muljim arrived in Kufa as planned. Here, he fell in love with a woman called Qutuam who hated Imam Ali (pbuh) (Her father and brother had been killed by Imam). She was very beautiful and agreed to marry Abdur Rahman on 3 conditions:-

1. 3000 Dirhams
2. A male & female slave
3. The head of Imam Ali (pbuh)

Although Abdur Rahman had come to Kufa to kill Imam Ali (pbuh) this boosted his determination. Qutuam, to help him asked two men from her tribe to assist Abdur Rahman.

Imam Ali (pbuh) had prophesied his death several days beforehand. The Prophet too had prophesied it and had said:

"O Ali! I see before my eyes your beard covered with blood from your forehead".

When Imam was leaving home on the morning of the 19th, the household birds began to make a great noise. When the servant came to quieten them, Imam said "Leave them alone for their cries are only lamenting over my coming death".

As he came to the masjid of Kufa for his morning prayers he awoke those who were sleeping including, Abdur Rahman bin Muljim who was sleeping on his stomach, hiding the poisoned sword under him. Imam told him that it was unhealthy to sleep on his front and also that he had a sword under his clothing, which he was going to use for evil intentions.



Imam then gave Adhaan and proceeded to lead prayers. In the first rakaat as he was arising from sajda he was struck on the head with the poisoned sword by ibn Muljim, which caused a deep wound. In the confusion ibn Muljim started running. Imam finished his second Sujud and requested Imam Hasan to complete the prayers. He uttered the words "Fuztu Birabbil Ka'aba" (I have been successful with the Lord of the Ka'ba).

The murderer was caught and brought before Imam Ali (pbuh). When Imam saw the ropes that ibn Muljim was tied in, Imam ordered them to be loosened and told the Muslims to treat him humanely. Ibn Muljim, on hearing this, started crying and Imam told him:

"It is too late to repent now. Was I a bad Imam or an unjust ruler?"

He ordered that ibn Muljim should not be tortured.

He was carried to his house and when he saw the bright day he said: "O day! You can bear testimony to the fact that during the lifetime of Ali you never once dawned and found me sleeping".

As they approached Imam's house, he asked the other companions to leave saying that his daughters on seeing his condition would weep and he did not wish any non-mahram to hear their voices.



DAY 20 - TAWBA, TABARRA, EXTRACTS OF LETTER TO IMAM HASAN (PBUH) FROM IMAM ALI (PBUH)

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratut Tahreem, aya 8 says:

“O you who believe, do tawba to Allah with a sincere turning, maybe your Rabb will remove from you your evil and cause you to enter gardens beneath which river flow.....”

Tawba is the first step on our journey of closeness to Allah. A human being has the opportunity to do tawba as long as he is alive and before death comes. Tawba in the aakhirah has no meaning for one is not in a position to do tawba nor can it be real for tawba is not just feeling regret but a total change of values and a correction of the wrong done.

The Qur'an in Suratu Yunus, aya 90 mentions Firawn:

“ Till when death overtook him, he said: ‘I believe that there is no God but He in whom the Bani Israil believe and I am one of those who submit.’”

As long as Firawn was alive he acted like a tyrant and nothing, even miracles convinced him. It is only at the point of death when there was no escape that he repented. This repentance was however due to helplessness. The answer given (found in the next aya of Suratu Yunus - aya 91) was:

“What! Now! And indeed you disobeyed before and you were one of the mischief makers.”

In other words, “why did you not do so an hour before when you were quite free to do so?”

You see, death is like the fall of a fruit from the tree. As long as it is part of the tree, it is dependant on air, water and nourishment that the tree obtains. Even an hour before falling, there is the chance for the fruit to become more ripe and sweet but the moment it falls from the tree the possibility of development comes to an end.



The human being is the fruit of nature with all the potential for the person to be good or bad. If we adopt taqwa, we are being ripened. If we sin, we are plagued like a rotten fruit. Tawba is a way by which one is nourished when one is alive, not after death.

Imam Ali (pbuh) said:

“Today is the time of deeds and not accounting whilst tomorrow (the hereafter) is the time for accounting and not deeds.”

Part of the recommended a’maal on the nights of Qadr, is to recite a hundred times “I seek forgiveness from my Allah, my Rabb and I turn to Him”

This should not be taken as a ritual. Every time we recite it, we must think of the sins we have committed and resolve within us to do sincere tawba. In our mind we must be able to go through the conditions for its acceptance and completion as taught by Imam Ali (pbuh).

The conditions are regretting what has been done and feeling ashamed, to make a resolution not to repeat the sin again, to return what belongs to others and gain acceptance of an apology.

Finally, to make the body which tasted the sweetness of sin to taste the pain of vigorous worship. Fasting is not easy when you have spent the entire night in ibada.

It is these for whom Allah says in the Qur’an in Suratul Baqara, aya 222:

“...Allah loves those who do tawba and loves those who are taahir.”

It means one should be both physically and spiritually clean.

It is mustahab to recite this when performing ghusl.

Another part of the a’maal specific to the nights of the 19 and 21 of the month of Ramadhan is to recite:



“O Allah! Remove from Your mercy (send la’na) one who killed Imam Ali (pbuh)”

This is actualising our waajibaat of Tabarra.

So what is Tabarra?

Allah in Suratul Ahzaab, aya 57 says:

“Indeed those who annoy Allah and His messenger, Allah has sent la’na (removed them from Him mercy) in the world and in the aakhira, and has prepared for them a painful punishment.”

Tabarra means to keep away from and abhor those who are the enemies of Allah, His Prophet and the Ma’sumeen. It also means keeping away from those who are evil.

Silence means consent when one watches evil and injustice and does nothing about it or feels nothing.

After he was fatally wounded on the 19 of Ramadhan, Imam Ali (pbuh) said:

"Tomorrow you will look back to my time and my innermost thoughts will be revealed to you. Then you will recognise me after I have left my position and another has taken my place".

Extracts from a letter Imam Ali (pbuh) wrote to his son, Imam Hasan (pbuh) on his way back from the battle of Siffeen:

From the father who is shortly to die, who acknowledges the hardship of the times...who realises the evil of the world...to the son who yearns for what is not to be achieved, who is treading the path of those who have died.....

I advise you to fear Allah. To abide by His commandments. To fill your heart with remembrance of him; and to cling to hope from him.



...Give up discussing what you do not know and speaking about what does not concern you.....Acquire insight into religious law.....Accustom yourself to bear hardship since the best trait of character is bearing in matters of right.....Know that there is no good in knowledge which does not benefit, and if knowledge is not made use of than its learning is not justified.

...Know that he who is the master of death is also the master of life...that he who inflicts disease is also the one who cures...

...O my child...the example of those who have understood the world is like those travellers who being disgusted with drought stricken places set off for a greener and fruitful place. They bear difficulties on the way, separation from friends, hardships of the journey and wholesome food to reach their fields of plenty and place of stay. Thus they feel no pain in all this and do not regard any expense as waste. Nothing is more loveable to them than that which takes them to their goal and closer to their place of stay. (Against this) the example of those who are fooled by the world is like the people who were in a green place but they were taken to a drought stricken place. To them nothing is more hateful than to leave the place where they were to go to a place where they reached unexpectedly and for which they are heading.

.....O my child! Make yourself the measure for dealing between you and others. You should desire for others what you desire for yourself.

.....O my child! Know that you have been created for the next world, not for this world.....for dying and not for living (in this world). You are in a place that does not belong to you, a house for making preparations and a passage towards the next world. You are being chased by death from which the runner away cannot escape as it would surely overtake him.



.....O my child! Remember death very much and the place where you have to go suddenly....so that when it comes you are already on your guard against it and have prepared yourself for it.....

.....Know with certainty that you cannot achieve your desire and cannot exceed your destined life.....



DAY 21 - WEALTH AND CHILDREN, MUNAJAAT OF IMAM ALI (PBUH), SHAHADAT - IMAM ALI (PBUH)

Allah in Suratul Munafiqun, aya 9 says:

“O you who believe, let not your wealth or your children, divert you from the remembrance of Allah and whoever does that, these are the losers.”

What does this aya mean? Does it mean that wealth and children are not important? Does it mean that we should not work hard to make a living or look after our children? Of course not! It means that if we are not mindful, both these can lead us away from the remembrance of Allah.

Wealth or money, on it's own it can be a curse because it is the summary of materialism - money is volatile in nature. It can therefore cause endless anxiety, for no matter how much you have, you are never sure whether it is enough or whether you will not somehow lose it all. When we put money in perspective and recognise why it was given to us, then it becomes a blessing instead of a curse - we can even make it eternal.

It is said that the hearts of the parents will return through their children. Children when young are single minded, and often to a child, it seems that he is the main focus of everyone's life. Because parents will do anything for their children, they sometimes even veer towards that which is wrong. For instance, how many times have parents done homework for their children knowing that the teacher is expecting work from the child, or written notes saying their child is ill when he is not? These may seem petty incidents but are in essence lying and deceiving which take us away from the zhikr of Allah? Will a parent say Bismillah...before writing such a note? In the munajat of Imam Ali (pbuh) also known as the munajat of Masjid e Kufa, Imam starts with:



“O Allah! I seek You for protection on the day when neither wealth nor sons will be of any benefit, except he who comes with a heart free (from evil).

This is with reference to aya 88 of Suratush Shuara.

What does munajat mean? The Arabic word munajat comes from the word ‘najwa’ which means secret. A munajat in Arabic means a secret, confidential conversation. The Urdu word munajat means a recital or qasida and is sometimes confused with the Arabic.

The Prophet (pbuh) has said:

“And when the abd (of Allah) turns to His Mawla in the middle of the night to do munajat, Allah will illuminate his/her heart. And when he says Ya Rabbiy, the Most Majestic will respond saying - Here I am, O My abd, ask Me, and I will give you, and rely on Me, and I will be sufficing for you. Then Allah turns to the angels and says- My Angels! ...bear witness that I have forgiven him.”

Every verse of the munajat of Imam Ali (pbuh) is a lesson in itself.

Let’s look at some of them:

“My Mawla! O my Mawla!

You are the Creator, and I am the created,

and who can have mercy on the created except the Creator?

The word ‘mawla’ comes from the word ‘wali’. One towards whom one is inclined. If a plant were to be placed in a room with one window, it will grow towards the window. The window becomes the wali of the plant. Therefore mawla is one towards whom we are totally inclined - body and nafs.

In the verse we acknowledge Allah as the Creator thus accepting that He knows best how we work and His laws are the only laws. We also acknowledge that only He can have mercy on us. As Imam Ali Zaynul Abedeen (pbuh) has said:



“When you are tried by a slip, do not complain of the Merciful to the merciless.”

“My Mawla, O my Mawla!

*You will always remain, and I am temporary,
and who can have mercy on the one who is temporary except one
who will always remain?*

Immediately this reminds us of the transient nature of our lives and the physical world. We must evaluate our lives in these nights and steer ourselves to be able to do that which will last. The verse reminds us of the imminence of death and the regret and remorse that will occur when it is too late.

It was on the 21st of Ramadhan, that our Imam breathed his last after being fatally struck on the head with a poisonous sword on the 19th of Ramadhan by one Abdur Rahmaan ibn Muljim (May Allah withdraw His Mercy from him).

When struck by the sword, he said”

“I have succeeded by the Lord of the Ka’ba.”

Then sprinkling some dust on his wound he recited aya 55 of Suratush Shua’ra:

“From it (the earth) We have created you, and to it We shall return you, and from it We shall take you out again.”

When his assassin was caught and brought before him, Imam saw the ropes that ibn Muljim was tied in and immediately he ordered them to be loosened and told the Muslims to treat him humanely.

Ibn Muljim, on hearing this, started crying and Imam told him *“It is too late to repent now. Was I a bad Imam or an unjust ruler?”*

Extracts from the will of Imam Ali (pbuh) written shortly before his death:



“Yesterday I was your companion, today I am a lesson for you, whilst tomorrow I shall have left you.

I am just like a night traveller who reaches the spring (in the morning) or like the seeker who secures his aim.

Fear Allah, to your affairs in order, and maintain good relations amongst yourselves for I have heard the Prophet say "Improvement of mutual differences is better than general praying and fasting".

Fear Allah and keep Allah in view when dealing with *orphans*.

Do not let them starve and they should not be ruined in your presence.

Fear Allah and Keep Allah in view in the matter of your *neighbours* because they were the subject of the Prophet's advice. He went on advising in their favour till we thought he would allow them a share in inheritance.

Fear Allah and keep Allah in view in the matter of *prayers*, because it is the pillar of religion.

Fear Allah and keep Allah in view in the matter of your Lord's house - *Ka'ba*. Do not forsake it as long as you live.

Fear Allah and keep Allah in view in the matter of *jihad* with the help of your *property, lives and tongues*.

Imam Hasan and Husayn (pbuh) gave their father ghusl and kafan and buried him in what is now known as najaf. As they covered the grave, the two orphaned brothers hugged each other and wept.

On their way back from burying their father, they heard a voice crying out:

“O you who used to come and feed me and tend my wounds! Where are you? I have not seen you for three days now!”



The brothers went towards the voice to find a leper who was weeping. He had been fed, washed and looked after by Imam Ali (pbuh) who used to come and sit with him.

When Imam Hasan and Husayn (pbuh) gently broke the news to him that his benefactor was no longer, he asked to be taken to the grave.

On reaching the grave he fell on it sobbing and breathed his last.



DAY 22 - MERITS OF LAYLATUL QADR, EXPLANATION OF SURATUL QADR

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Ahzaab, aya 41 says:

"O you who believe! Remember Allah, remembering Him frequently; and glorify Him morning and evening."

Prophet Musa (pbuh) once addressed Allah saying: "Ya Rabbiy! I desire to be near to You."

Allah said: "Whoever desires nearness to Me is one who remains awake during Laylatul Qadr (doing ibada)."

Prophet Musa (pbuh) said:

"Ya Rabbiy! I wish to earn Your mercy."

Allah replied: "My mercy is granted to anyone who is merciful to the underprivileged during Laylatul Qadr."

Prophet Musa (pbuh) said:

"Ya Rabbiy! I wish to pass on the right path."

Allah replied: "This is granted to anyone who gives sadaqa during Laylatul Qadr."

Prophet Musa (pbuh) said:

"Ya Rabbiy! I wish to enjoy the trees and fruits of Janna!"

Allah replied: "This is granted to anyone who praises Me during Laylatul Qadr."

Prophet Musa (pbuh) said:

"Ya Rabbiy! I wish to achieve salvation from the fire!"

Allah replied: "This is granted to anyone who seeks forgiveness during Laylatul Qadr."

Prophet Musa (pbuh) said:

"Ya Rabbiy! I wish to achieve Your pleasure!"

Allah replied: "I shall be pleased with anyone who prays two (mustahab) rak'ats salaa during Laylatul Qadr."



LAYLATUL QADR

What does the word 'Qadr' mean?

Qadr means decree and measure. It also means destiny because it is according to a measure that things unfold and develop.

This name was used for Laylatul Qadr because Allah determines in it for everyone all what will happen the entire next year. The "Qadr" in this sense means destiny. According to al- Qummi's Tafsir, as explained on p. 432 of its second volume, such destiny includes life and death, sustenance, abundance of crops or famine and everything good or bad. This means that Allah determines in this night each and every event to occur during the next year to any and all of His creation.

When is Laylatul Qadr?

The night of Qadr is said to be any one of the odd nights in the last ten days of the month of Ramadhan. Our ma'sumeen have given more importance to the 19th, 21st and 23rd and 27th nights out of which the 23rd night is regarded as the most adheem.

What is so special about Laylatul Qadr?

The Prophet (pbuh) has said:

"Allah has favoured Friday over all other days, the month of Ramadhan over all other months, and Laylatul Qadr over all other nights."

The Qur'an was revealed on Laylatul Qadr as Allah says in Suratul Qadr.

SURATUL QADR

Merits of recitation.

The Prophet (pbuh) has said:

"For anyone who recites Suratul Qadr, Allah writes down a good deed for every particle of dust where he sits while reciting it."



"It is a good companion for anyone who wishes to pay off his debt, strengthen his/her faith, prolong life-span, and improve his/her condition. Anyone who recites it often will meet Allah as a siddeeq and as a martyr."

Sulayman al- Marzawi asked Imam Ali Ar-Ridha (pbuh):

"Could you please tell us why Suratul Qadr was revealed?"

Imam replied: "O Sulayman! Laylatul Qadr is the night when Allah decrees what will take place from one year to another of life or death, good or evil, or regarding sustenance, and whatever He then decrees is sure destiny."

It is recommended to recite Suratul Qadr a thousand times on Laylatul Qadr or as many times as possible.

After Bismillah, The first two ayaat say:

"Indeed we sent it (the Qur'an) on Laylatul Qadr!

And what will make you know what Laylatul Qadr is?

It is therefore the night when the Qur'an as a whole was revealed. According to one hadith, Suratul Fatiha was revealed on that night and as the rest of the Qur'an is an explanation of Suratul Fatiha, it is as though the whole Qur'an was revealed. Suratul Fatiha is also known as Ummul Kitab - the mother of the book.

Another hadith states that it is the night when the the whole of the Qur'an was sent down to Baytul Ma'mur - a place in the heavens directly above the Ka'ba and then revealed piecemeal to the Prophet (pbuh) over 23 years. The Prophet (pbuh) visited baytul m'amur when he went on me'raj.

The sura then continues:

"Lalylatul Qadr is better than a thousand nights."

Normally when one compares there is a qualitative statement. For example - a particular brand is better than another. Here the comparison is quantitative - \$1 in sadaqa is equivalent to \$30,000,



recitation of 1 aya of Qur'an is equivalent to the recitation of 30,000 ayaat, 2 rakaat ssalaa equivalent to 60,000 rakaats...

Finally:

"The angels and the ruh descend in it with the permission of their Rabb with all the commands. Peace! It is until the break of dawn"

The coming to the earth of the angels and the rooh during the night continues from the time of Prophet Adam (pbuh) until the day of Qiyama. The place of descent is a human heart, which must be ma'sum. Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (pbuh) has said:

"Argue against those who deny the continuity of the divine Imam on earth with this sura."

Some mufasssireen have said that rooh is the angel Jibrail. However, some say that it is a presence greater than Jibrail.

Why can the affairs or commands of humankind not be decided in the heavens?

'Amr', orders of the Earth, must be decided on Earth by 'Sahibul Amr' who is none other than our Imam Al-Mahdi (pbuh)

It is reported that Imam raises his hands is dua on laylatul Qadr for the forgiveness of the Umma.

In essence the night of Qadr is a night for introspection.



DAY 23 - EXTRACTS FROM DUA TAWBA AND MAKARIMUL AKHLAQ, MERITS OF SURATUL QADR, EXPLANATION OF A'MAAL OF LAYLATUL QADR

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Ahzaab, aya 41 says:

“O you who believe! Remember Allah, remembering Him frequently; and glorify Him morning and evening.”

The night of the 23rd of the month of Ramadhan - Laylatul Qadr is one of the nights when all Muslims will remember Allah as per the aya just recited.

Imam Ali Ridha (pbuh) has said:

“He who sleeps in this night does not know what he has missed. Had he known he would not have slept.”

It is recommended to stay awake and reflect even if one does not perform any ibada.

One of the things which helps to keep awake is to eat little during the day. Sayyida Fatima Zahra (pbuh) used to feed her family a light meal in the day preceding laylatul qadr. Allama Majlisi writes that when the ark of Prophet Nuh (pbuh) rested on the mountain after the deluge, Shaytan who was saved in it wished to repay Prophet Nuh (pbuh) for saving his life. *“I will give you three pieces of advice”* he said. *“Ya Nabiyallah! When someone is alone with a namehram, I am always the third one there; the worst of all beings is the haasid (one who is jealous)-had it not been for jealousy Kabil would not have killed Habil and finally, Ya Nabiyallah! If you want to do the ibada of Allah, do not fill the stomach for I enter the body through the stomach.”*



Three things are recommended on this night.

- To give sadaqa at the beginning and at the end of the night.
- To remember Allah a lot and doing dua ending the night with Salatul Layl.
- Finally, ghusl at the beginning of the night with the niyya of mustahab qarbatan ilallah.

It is recommended that we recite Dua Tawba and Dua Makarimul Akhlaq. We begin with tawba for we need to cleanse ourselves before we beautify ourselves with the advice in Dua Makarimul Akhlaq.

Imam Ali (pbuh) has described those who do tawba as:

"...They planted the trees of their sins in front of their eyes and hearts, and watered them with the water of regret. They gained the fruits of peace, followed by the pleasure of Allah and His respect."

Extracts from both these duas:

From Dua Tawba:

*"...O Allah! I do tawba (I turn to you) in this position from:
my sins, the major and the minor,
my evil deeds, the hidden and the open,
my errors, past and recent.....*

*And You have said, O my God, in Your established book,
that You accept the tawba from your devotees,
that You pardon sins,
and that You love those who do tawba.*

*Then accept my tawba, as You have promised,
and pardon my evil deeds as You have guaranteed...."*

From Dua Makarimul Akhlaq:

*"O Allah, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad.
Raise my eiman to reach the most perfect eiman,
and make my certainty the most excellent of certainties,*



*Make my niyya the best of niyyaat,
and my actions the best of actions..."*

*"...raise me not a single degree with people unless You have
lowered me within myself with an equal amount.."*

"..O Allah! seal my (life) term with Your pardon.."

It is also recommended to recite Suratu Rum, Suratul Ankabut and Suratud Dukhan. Imam Ja'fer As-Sadiq (pbuh) has said that whoever recites the suwer of Rum and Ankabut on Laylatul Qadr with mind and heart will surely enter Janna without exception...and indeed these two suwer have a high position with Allah.

In Suratud Dukhan there is an indirect reference made to the night of Qadr. It was the first time the Muslims were informed about the night. The other sura of the Qur'an which mentions Laylatul Qadr directly is Suratul Qadr which is recommended to be read a thousand times.

Imam Ali (pbuh) has said:

"Every thing has a fruit, and the fruit of the Holy Qur'an is Suratul Qadr

Everything has a treasure, and the treasure that removes poverty is Suratul Qadr.

For everything there is a means whereby it can be attained, and the means of the weak is Suratul Qadr."

For every hardship there is ease, and the ease of those suffering from hardship is Suratul Qadr.

There is a shield against every evil, and the shield of the believers is Suratul Qadr.

For everything there is guidance, and the guidance of the righteous is Suratul Qadr.

There is excellence for everything, and the excellence of knowledge is Suratul Qadr.



There is an adornment for everything, and the adornment of the Qur'an is Suratul Qadr.

There is a shelter for everything, and the shelter of the faithful is Suratul Qadr.

There is a glad tiding for everything, and the glad tiding of the innocent is Suratul Qadr.

There is a Proof (Hujja) for everything, and the Hujja after the Prophet (pbuh) is Suratul Qadr, therefore, believe in it."

Imam was asked how to believe in it, and he answered:

"That it shall occur in each and every year, and that everything revealed in it is true."

An a'maal that is synonymous with Laylatul Qadr is where we place the Qur'an on our heads and recite the names of the ma'sumeen. In this a'mal we are following the Prophet (pbuh) who in his sermon at Ghadeer e Khum said:

"O my followers! I am leaving behind two heavy (valuable) things as legacies to you and it is to be seen how you behave with these two legacies of mine"

He was asked what these two valuable things were to which he replied:

"On of them is the book of Allah...and the other thing is my progeny and my Ahlulbayt. Allah has informed me that these two things will not get separated from each other."

"O people! Do not seek precedence over the Qur'an and over my progeny, and do not be negligent in your behaviour towards them, lest you be destroyed."

We put the Qur'an on our heads demonstrating our acceptance of its authority and utter the names of the ma'sumeen on our lips. Remember, the book is the quiet Qur'an whilst the ma'sumeen are the expressive Qur'an.



If possible on this night we recite the Dua Jawshan Kabeer. Jawshan means armour and it is a unique dua containing Asmaaul Husna (the most beautiful names of Allah). It is quoted in Mafatihul Jinaan that imam Ali Zaynul Aabedeem (pbuh) has said that this dua was brought to the Prophet (pbuh) by Jibrail when in one battle his heavy armour was giving him difficulty. Allah had sent the dua as a means of protection for the Prophet (pbuh) and his Umma. Finally, we must remember the merit of doing these a'mal as a group. For when Allah accepts from a gathering, He accepts from all. May Allah accept the efforts of all.



DAY 24 - MERITS OF JUMUA', EXTRACTS FROM DUA NUDBA

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Jumua', aya 10 says:

"O you who believe! when the call is made for prayers (salaah) on the day of Jumua' (Friday), then hurry to the remembrance of Allah and leave trading (worldly business); that is better for you if (only) you knew."

The word jumua' in itself means congregation. It is a day for congregational prayers, a weekly demonstration of brotherhood of Islam and the unity of the believers.

Daily prayers are said individually or in the local mosque. On Jumua' Muslims within the radius of about 5 miles attend one congregational prayer.

Twice a year on Eid Muslims of a whole area (city) meet and once a year the international assembly of Muslims is at Makka for Hajj. The first Jumua' prayers were held at Quba - 3.5 miles from Madina. When the Prophet (pbuh) arrived at Quba on his way from Makka during hijra he first arranged for the building of a masjid there. Then he delivered a sermon and offered the Friday prayers before proceeding to Makka.

The Prophet (pbuh) has said:

"Indeed the 24 hours of the night and day of Friday belong to Allah, in every hour there are six hundred thousand opportunities of freedom from the fire."

Remember that the night precedes the day and therefore Jumua' begins at Maghrib on Thursday.

The Prophet (pbuh) has also said:



The recompense for deeds on Friday is twice as much. So avoid sins and perform good deeds to gain more thawab.”

Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (pbuh) has said:

“As soon as the sun sets and Friday begins, Allah orders an angel to announce - Is there any mu’min abd who before the night ends asks for safety in this world and peace in the hereafter so I may grant it to him?

Is there any mu’min abd who turns to me in tawba so I may forgive him?

Is there any mu’min abd who is in distress, seeks livelihood, who is in distress, or seeks health in illness, or freedom from captivity, or gain in times of loss....I will grant him whatever is asked for if I am called upon tonight.”

It is highly recommended to do the ghusl of Jumua’ preferably between Fajr and Dhuhr (as near to dhuhr as possible). The Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have said to Imam Ali (pbuh):

“Ya Ali! Perform ghusl on Friday even if it means that by purchasing the water you will have to give up a day’s food...”

Wearing neat clean clothes, cutting nails, trimming hair and applying scent are all recommended for it is a day of Eid.

Reciting of Ayatul Kursi, Suratul Jumua’, Suratul Ikhlas and Salawaat are also recommended.

Jumua’ is associated with the Imam of our time, Imam Muhammad Al-Mahdi (pbuh). He was born on a Friday and it is reported that in ahadith that the dhuhur of Imam will be on a Friday. It is highly recommended to give sadaqa for his safety on Jumua’ and recite the Dua An-Nudba and and ziyara of Imam Mahdi (pbuh)

It is a day when we should remember our marhumeen and pray for their maghfira, give sadaqa and do good deeds for them especially in the month of Ramadhan. There is no way to replace a loved one



who has died but by doing virtue in their memory we build a living memorial. Dedicate at least Jumu'a to the marhumeen.

Extracts from Dua Nudba:

"...Where is the son of the chosen Prophet? The son of Ali Al-Murtadha, the son of Khadija...the son of Fatima...It breaks my heart when I look at all that has been created and I cannot see you, nor hear a whisper about your whereabouts, nor any secret communication...I eagerly long for you who is in ghayba.... O son of Ahmed! Can you not arrange our meeting? How long shall we keep waiting for you? When shall we be happy and see your radiance..."
"O Allah! Let us be with him when he makes peace, and frees humankind from fear... spreads virtue and justice, so that we may do our best to promote his cause through Your rahma... Accept our dua, forgive our sins, and fulfill our desires..."

It is also recommended to devote Friday in learning about religion. Make a resolution to devote half an hour if not more to learn maybe 2 masails of Fiqh. Recite a rukoo of Qur'an and read a little of the many books at our disposal.



DAY 25 - JUMUA'TUL WIDAA, EXTRACTS FROM DUA WIDAA, YAWMUL QUDS

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Jumua', aya 10 says:

"O you who believe! when the call is made for prayers (salaah) on the day of Jumua' (Friday) , then hurry to the remembrance of Allah and leave trading (worldly business) ; that is better for you if (only) you knew."

The last Friday in the month of Ramadhan is known as Jumua'tul Widaa. It is a sad occasion for we bid goodbye to the month in which we are the guests of Allah - a month whose blessings are unmatched. Let us look at some extracts from the duas by Imam Zaynul Aabedeem (pbuh) and Imam Ja'fer As-Sadiq (pbuh) bidding farewell to the month.

*"...Salaams to you, o object of hope whose sepration causes grief...,
Salaams to you, o friend who became familiar on arrival and
delighted us and makes us feel lonely and sad when it leaves...,
Salaams to you, o helper who helped against Shaytan, o companion
who made the path to goodness easy,
...Salaams to you, what a great eraser of sins you are...,
Salaams to you, o month with which no other days can compete...
Salaams to you, how much did we long for you and how intense will
be our eagerness for you tomorrow (for you to come again)....
Ya Allah! Whatever sin, great or small, we may have
committed...whatever wrong we did in this month deliberately or in
error thus doing dhulm to our own nafs, I send salawat on
Muhammad and his Ahlulbayt,.....forgive us with Your pardon...."*

Ayatullah Khumayni requested the Umma to dedicate Jumuatul Widaa' as Yawm Al-Quds (the day of Al-Quds) -

So what is Al-Quds? It is the name for Jerusalem. Yawm Al-Quds is therefore a day to remember the oppression of the Muslims in Jerusalem and to raise our voices against the injustice. Jerusalem



contains Baytul Muqaddas. Both Masjidul Aqsa and the dome of the rock are built on the area of Baytiul Muqaddas.

It was here that the Prophet (pbuh) prayed on his way to the heavens for me'raaj.

Baytul Muqaddas was the first Qibla for salaa.

In order to understand what has happened we need to look at the history of Palestine.

Palestine was brought under Muslim control at the time of Umar ibn al-Khattab. Palestine was then made part of the Islamic state being ruled by Islamic law. The new laws were welcomed not only by the Muslims, but also by the Jews and Christians of Palestine, who had formerly been living under the tyrannical Byzantine yoke. The Byzantines were persecuting the Christians of the area because the Palestinian Christians belonged to a different Christian sect. The Muslims however guaranteed all Christians freedom of religion regardless of their sect.

In 1099 A.D. Palestine was invaded by the European Crusaders and subsequently occupied for nearly a century. During the occupation massacres and great injustices were committed against the Muslim, Jewish and native Christian residents of the area.

In 1187 A.D. Palestine was liberated by the Muslims under the leadership of Salah al-Din Al-Ayyubi, who brought back Islamic law to the area.

In 1916 the Arab elites announced their revolt against the Ottoman Islamic Empire at the instigation of the British who promised the Arabs an "Arab" rather than "Islamic" Kingdom.

In 1917 the British government issued the Balfour Declaration which declared Palestine to be a homeland for Jews. At the time Jews



made up approximately 8% of the population of Palestine and owned approximately 2.5% of the land.

In 1918 the British and their Arab nationalist allies defeated the Ottomans. The British dismembered the Ottoman Empire and occupied Palestine. The British immediately began a campaign of immigrating European Jews to Palestine.

In 1948 the Jews claimed the establishment of a state for themselves over the land of Palestine and called it Israel. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims were forced out of Palestine under the military pressure of Jewish terrorist groups, which were financed and armed by the British army.

At this point it is worth mentioning that there is a difference between the Jews that follow the Tawraat (Torah) and those who have invented their own religion called Zionism. Zionism seeks to force the end of the exile of the Jewish people from what they call their holy land. The Torah Jews believe that their exile will end miraculously when all humankind will believe in the One God. The Torah Jews condemn the acts and aggression of the Zionists.

In 1967 Israel attacked Egypt, Jordan and Syria and occupied more land including for the first time Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa. Since that time Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa has been the target of several attempts by the Zionists to destroy or burn it, including several attempts to bring about its collapse through underground excavations. The Zionists know that Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa is symbolic of the Islamic nature of the land and want to remove any trace of Islamic civilization from Palestine.

In December 1987, the Palestinians began an uprising (Intifada) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip against the continued Zionist occupation. Despite thousands of deaths and injuries, the



Palestinians are determined to maintain the struggle for their rights and dignity. Since the uprising began, settlers have kidnapped and tortured Palestinian children and have staged hundreds of vigilante raids on Palestinian villages. In June 1989 Rabbi Yitzhak Ginsburg excused the murder of a fourteen-year-old Palestinian girl by religious students on the grounds that spilling "non Jewish blood was not, in God's eyes, the same thing as spilling the blood of Jews."

Israeli aggression has increased hundred fold since then. In the year 2002 they invaded the Palestinian territories killing under the name of war against terrorism.

Silence is in itself an acceptance and approval of injustice. We can at least raise our voices, and pray for the liberation of Al-Quds.



DAY 26 - WASILA (A MEANS OF NEARNESS)

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratut Mai'da, aya 35 says:

“O you who believe! Have taqwa and seek a wasila (a means of nearness) to Him, and do jihad in His way so that you may be successful.”

Imagine that you have lived your entire life in a dark tunnel. You have grown accustomed to the darkness and developed the necessary skills to survive. However, you have been told from divine sources, you believe deep within you and you have often seen glimpses of a source of light, which is accessible to you as long as you let it in because darkness just does not seem right to you. That light is provided by Allah, and is available to one and all. The light is what we call 'wasila' -

In his last sermon at Ghadeer Khum, the Prophet (pbuh) specified the wasilas -

“O my followers! I am leaving behind two heavy (valuable) things as legacies to you and it is to be seen how you behave with these two legacies of mine”

“On of them is the book of Allah...and the other thing is my progeny and my Ahlulbayt. Allah has informed me that these two things will not get separated from each other.”

“O people! Do not seek precedence over the Qur'an and over my progeny, and do not be negligent in your behaviour towards them, lest you be destroyed.”

The two wasilas are the Qur'an and the Ahlulbayt. If we look at aya 35 of Suratut Mai'da, it precedes the finding of the wasila with taqwa. Only when we can cultivate taqwa within us - that is fulfilling all our waajibaat and avoiding muharramaat can we seek closeness to Allah through the Qur'an and ahlulbayt. The a'maal we do on the nights of Qadr, with the Qur'an on our head and the uttering of the



names of the Ahlulbayt is not just lip service. It is reaffirming to ourselves that it is with these two that we will move forward. Once we accept this we are free! Free from the shackles of the material world, which confines us to darkness. Before we can escape the darkness we must acknowledge that without these two wasilas we live in exile from light.

On a hot summer's day, an old man once went down into a cool cellar for relief. The moment he entered the cellar he was blinded by the darkness. Another man who was in the cellar told him: "Do not worry! It is quite natural that when you first come in from light to darkness, you are unable to see. However, your eyes will get used to it and you will hardly notice the dark." The old man replied turning to leave: "That is exactly what I am afraid of. Darkness is darkness; the danger is convincing yourself that there is light." Just like the anecdote, the danger in our lives is to get so used to the darkness that we stop looking for the light. We get so used to the day-to-day materialistic life that we get used to a life without the Qur'an and the Ahlulbayt.

Take each day of your life and rethink it. How can I make each day, each minute lighted?

When I wake up do I say - "Alhamdulillah wallahu Akber" - All praise is for Allah and Allah is greater than anything or anyone. In other words with Him, I can do anything today.

Do I greet everyone in the house with Salaam - As I do my wudhoo for Salatul Fajr - do I at least think of the duas for each step of the way? Do I recite adhan loudly for I know that the angels in the heaven too stop to hear the one who recites adhan loudly on the earth? Do I recite a few ayaat of Qur'an loudly? Did I tidy my bedroom so that when I leave for work or school, it does not cause hardship to my mother?

All these simple things taught to us by the wasilas provided by Allah transform our lives and radiate the transformation to those around us.



We are conditioned to see the passing of time as an enemy. We are always rushing to do one thing or another, or to get to one place or another. But time too is a creation of Allah, and as such has a life of its own. When we waste a moment, we have killed it in a sense, squandering an irreplaceable opportunity. But if we used the moment properly, it lives on forever. Make every moment valuable by converting the materialistic into the spiritual - it is not difficult - we have been provided the ne'ma of wasilas.



DAY 27 - JIHAD

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratut Maaida', aya 35 says:

"O you who believe! Have taqwa and seek a wasila (a means of nearness) to Him, and do jihad in His way so that you may be successful."

The wasila provided by Allah are the Qur'an and the Ahlulbayt. With taqwa - fulfilling waajibaat and keeping away from muharramaat we need to acknowledge and follow the wasilas provided by Allah.

The third condition in the aya to success is to do jihad in the way of Allah. So what is jihad?

The term 'jihad' is derived from the root word 'jahada' which means to strive, to be diligent. From that comes another specific verb 'jaahad', which means specifically, to endeavour, to struggle, to strive, to contend with, to fight against. 'Jihad' is from the latter verb. In essence it literally means to do utmost effort to achieve an objective - in Islamic terminology it means to endeavour and sacrifice for the cause of Allah to establish, preserve and revive Islam.

There are two kinds of jihad, JIHAD AL AKBER, the major jihad and JIHAD AL ASGHER, the minor jihad.

Jihad Al Akber is the struggle for self-purification and control of one's desires. In more basic terms, Jihad Al Akbar means fulfilment of our duties to Allah and to His creation. In respect to the Muslim umma it means to wage war against ignorance by acquiring and spreading knowledge, against disease, against poverty by ensuring that every member of the community has the means of basic living. It means striving against disunity by giving up our destructive habit of point scoring and by trying to understand the points of view of others, against anti-Islamic forces from within first, by amr bil



ma'ruf and nahyi anil munkar and finally against religion becoming a mere ritual by making every effort to raise the level of our spirituality

Jihad Al Asgher means to struggle for Islam. Not for extension of boundaries, not for personal glory, not for the glory of any community or nation, but for the defence of Islam and the protection of its values.

Defence means to force the aggressor to retreat in order to safeguard belief, life, property, honour, freedom... It is a right, which belongs to every living creature. Allah has provided all creatures with the means of defence, which enables them to survive.

Such a struggle can take many forms, through the use of pen, through the use of tongue or through the use of the sword.

This last form is often referred to in the Qur'an as qitaal (warfare). While self-defence is permitted at any time, in general only an Imam can declare qitaal. In any case no qitaal can be regarded as a jihad if it is for territorial expansion or material gain to fulfil any personal, communal or national ambition. Imam Ali -Ar-Ridha (pbuh) has said: *"And as for jihad (qitaal), it is wajib with a just Imam...."*

Unfortunately, many believe that 'jihad' only means 'qitaal' (warfare). Many Muslims were led to believe, and many still do, that taking up arms for any cause of Muslims was a jihad whether or not that cause related to Islam. This group is convinced that conquests were achieved and empires founded through jihad. This suited those who were hostile towards Islam and gave a sense of pride in the past glory, to the ignorant believers. The majority distanced themselves from the true meaning of jihad and developed a kind of religious fervour based on obstinate hostility.



The Prophet (pbuh) knew the trap the Muslims were likely to fall into, if they did not understand the true meaning of jihad. On return from one of the battles the Holy Prophet addressed the Muslims as follows:

"You have now returned from jihad al-asghar. The jihad al-akbar continues to remain a duty with you."



DAY 28 - INTIDHAR OF IMAM (PBUH)

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratus Saff, aya 10 & 11 says:

“O you who believe! Shall I show you a business, which will save you from painful punishment? You should believe in Allah and His messenger and do jihad in the way of Allah with your possessions and yourselves; that is better for you, if only you knew!”

The aya of Qur'an states two conditions, which will save us from adhab. One is eiman in Allah and His Prophet (pbuh) and the other is jihad with one's possessions and ones own self.

Firstly let us look at eiman or faith. What is it?

The Prophet (pbuh) has said:

“Eiman is divided into two halves - one half lies in Sabr (patience) and the other half in shukr (thankfulness)”

He also said:

‘Islam is outward whereas eiman is in the heart (inward).’

In other words acknowledging the religion is Islam, acting according to it is eiman - makes one a mu'min.

The next condition is to do jihad. Imam Ali (pbuh) in Nahjul Balagha says that Jihad is one of the doors of Janna.

To strive, to do jihad to remain a mu'min takes many forms. One of the most basic forms of jihad is jihad in our conduct. Imam Ali Ar-Ridha (pbuh) gives some basic advice:

“Behave with the friend humbly and with the enemy carefully and the people with a smiling face...”

For us maybe the most important form is the jihad of intidhar- Imam Ja'fer As-Sadiq (pbuh) has said:

“The one who dies amongst you whilst he is in intidhar for Imam Mahdi is like the one who is in the tent of Imam Mahdi...nay, rather



like the one who has done jihad with the Imam...rather, like the one who was a shaheed whilst doing jihad with the Prophet (pbuh)"

So what is intidhar?

Intidhar means waiting for the appearance of Imam Muhammad Al-Mahdi (pbuh)

When someone we love goes to study or work in another country, we long to see them and we "wait" for their return. We also try and keep in contact with them. When we know that they are going to come back, we begin to prepare for their return.

Intidhar for Imam also has a similar meaning. We have to try our best to ensure that when Imam comes we have our affairs in order and we have prepared a society with which he will be pleased. During the ghayba of the Imam, there exists a "postal system" between the Shia's and their Imam. In this "postal system" not only do we write letters but our actions and deeds are also communicated on our behalf.

Imam himself is reported to have said:

"We are not heedless of your life affairs and do not forget remembering you..."

According to ahadith every Thursday night, the scrolls of deeds of all the human beings are presented to Imam. The cause of Imam's happiness and pride or sorrow and grief (whatever the case may be) are the scrolls of deeds of the Shias. These scrolls of deeds are our weekly letters, which we send to our Imam during the period of occultation.

If we want to keep Imam happy and proud, we should send good reports to him and that means we have to be careful in our daily lives and see that whatever we do is not against the laws of the sharia.



The one who is truly waiting for the Imam (a Muntadhir) is one who feels the presence of his Imam all the time, and tries to live in a way, which would make the Imam happy.

Dua al Hujja taught to us by Imam Mahdi (pbuh) gives us a clear guideline of what Imam expects of us. When we are taught to ask Allah, it means to strive (do jihaad) for whatever we are asking and to pray as well. E.g. just praying for Allah to cure the sick will not make them better - both medicine and dua are required.

Extracts from Dua Al-Hujja -

“O Allah

Bless us with success in obeying (You) and (keep us) far from sins, sincerity in intention and recognition of (our) limits, bless us with guidance and steadfastness and guide our tongues to righteousness and wisdom, fill our hearts with knowledge and understanding and purify our stomachs from haram and doubtful (foods), restrain our hands from injustice and theft and lower our eyes from immorality and breach of faith, close our ears to idle talks and back-biting...”



DAY 29 - EID UL FITR

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Baqara, aya 264 says:

“O you who believe! Do not make your sadaqa (charity) worthless by abuse and injury, like the one who spends his/her property in the way of Allah to be seen by others and does not believe in Allah and the last day...”

We associate the coming of Eid with giving especially to those who are less fortunate than ourselves. During the month of Ramadhan we become familiar with the experience of the needy and poor who stay hungry not out of choice but because of lack of food. By fasting we appreciate the blessings bestowed upon us by Allah and become charitable towards those in need. As if to re-enforce the idea in our minds, Allah has made a wajib charity of Zakat ul Fitr at the end of the month of Ramadhan.

Fitra becomes wajib after the moon of Shawwal is sighted upon a person who is baligh, intelligent & sane and for his dependants - these include guests. Fitra is not wajib on a needy person (faqeer) or a slave.

Fitra must be given from that which is the staple food of the giver like wheat, barley, dates, raisins, rice, milk ...etc..The amount is approximately 3 kg of the food or its cash value. It is to be given to a needy person (faqeer), who is unable to meet living expenses for himself and his dependants for a year. It could be that he has no other means of earning a livelihood. A non-seyyid cannot give Fitra to a seyyid (one from the progeny of the Prophet (pbuh)) It is ehtiyate wajib to set aside Fitra before Eid salaa and for those not praying Eid salaa before Dhuhr. Fitra is a zaka and can also be used for the works where zaka is used.



In Sahifatus Sajjadiyya, Imam Ali Zaynul Aabedeem (pbuh) in his dua for eid says:

"O Allah! Bless us in the day of our Eid and our fast breaking and let it be the best day that has passed over us."

Eid is an Arabic word derived from root of *a-w-d*. Literally it means a recurring event. In Islam it denotes the festivals of Islam. The word *Eid* occurs in the Qur'an once meaning a joyous recurring occasion.

In Suratul Maa'ida, aya 114, Allah says:

"Isa the son of Maryam said: O Allah, our Lord! Send down to us food from heaven which should be to us a Eid (joyous recurring occasion), to the first of us and for last of us, and a sign from You, and grant us means of subsistence, and You are the best of Providers."

Human history has known festivals from the earliest days of man on earth. Human beings have celebrated festivals ever since they knew communal life. Ancient Egyptians had one called the day of adornment. It was during one such festival that Prophet Musa (pbuh) defeated the magicians.

Eid ul Fitr is the festival that marks the end of the month of Ramadhan. Fitr means to break and it therefore marks the breaking of the fasting period and of all evil habits. Happiness is observed at attaining spiritual upliftment after a month of fasting.

Imam Ali (pbuh) has said that Eid is a day of happiness for those whose fasts and prayers have been accepted by Allah. He has also said that Eid is the day in which one has committed no sins.

Imam Ali Zaynul Aabideem (pbuh) in his dua for Eid says:

"O Allah! write down for us the reward of those who kept siyaam in the month of Ramadhan and did Your ibada....Indeed we do tawba on this day of fitr which you have made for us an Eid, of every sin we



committed....of evil thoughts w entertained; this is the tawba of one who secretly does not wish to sin....a sincere tawba, therefore accept it from us and be pleased with us..."



DAY 30 - REVIEW OF THE MONTH OF RAMADHAN

Allah in the Qur'an in Suratul Baqara, aya 183 says:

"O you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you so that you may have taqwa."

Let us do a review of the month of Ramadhan, which is closing, and reflect in our own individual ways as to where we have reached on the ladder of taqwa.

Most of us in this month are aware of the Islamic date and the timing for salaa exactly to the minute. A habit once kept for a month is easily continued if desired. Salaa is the key to management - once we organise our day around salaa, we will find that although we cannot add more minutes to the day but we will be able to focus and utilise each moment making it into a meaningful one.

Another habit most of us have Insha'Allah instilled within us is the recitation of Qur'an. It is a habit whose rewards are countless. The least we can do is recite at least ten ayaat a day. Read them loudly repeating the same ten after each wajib salaa until they ring in your ears. At the end of the day when you have a little more time, look at one of the ayaat, and ponder over it's meaning. How does it relate to your life?

In Suratun Nahl, aya Allah says:

"..We have revealed to you the book which clarifies every matter..."

Listen to the following job application! Would you give the applicant a job in your family?

"I would like a job as a teacher and advisor to your family. I will never take a holiday.

I am always truthful; I will be up in the morning as early as anyone wishes and stay up as late as you wish.



I will help solve all your problems; I will heal all your illnesses and answer all your questions.

I will solve all your differences in opinions and give you all the information you will ever need.

In short I will give you all the knowledge that will ensure your success in the world and in the hereafter.

I am the Qur'an - Do I get the job?"

We have also made a habit of learning something new everyday.

Maybe we can continue this by reading or listening as a family.

By fasting we appreciate and recognise the pangs of hunger and thirst felt by those who are in need of basic necessities like food and drink. At least we could look forward to a filling iftaar; there are people all over the world who are less well off than ourselves. Let us

store the feeling and be able to contribute to charity and serve humanity in the next eleven months. Ask yourself every night-

Is anybody happier because you passed their way?

Does anyone remember that you spoke to them today?

Can you say tonight, in parting with the day that's slipping fast, that you helped a single brother or sister of the many that you passed?

Is a single heart rejoicing over what you did or said?

Does the man whose hopes were fading now with courage look ahead?

Did you leave a trail of kindness, or a scar of discontent?

As you close your eyes in slumber, do you think that Allah will say, "You have earned one more tomorrow by the work you did today?"

Finally, the best deed of the month as taught to us by the Prophet (pbuh) is keeping away from muharramaat. Let us make resolutions of keeping away from that which is haraam. Sometimes it is the little things that we probably do not even regard as sins that we need to



put the most effort in to avoid. The little white lie, the gossiping, the mocking, the odd qadha salaa, the small injustices....

A man wrote to Abu Dharr who was a respected companion of the Prophet (pbuh) for some good advice. Abu Dharr asked him not to do dhulm to the one he loved the most.

When the man received the reply he was a little disappointed. What was Abu Dharr trying to say? How would anyone do dhulm on the one he loved the most? He decided to write back to Abu Dharr asking for an explanation.

Abu Dharr replied:

"The meaning is quite simple. To every living being the most loved one is the self (nafs). To you, your nafs is the most beloved and therefore I meant for you not to do dhulm on your nafs."

"Remember, when one commits a sin and acts against the laws of Allah, one harms one self."

Someone asked Imam Muhammad Baqir (pbuh)

"What is the smallest punishable sin (dhulm) that one commits against another person?"

Imam asked him to stretch his hand. Then Imam asked for permission to squeeze it.

Imam squeezed his hand gently. The man gasped a little.

Imam said:

"That is the smallest punishable sin."



“Soft words in a lullaby put a baby to sleep.

Hateful words stir violence.

Eloquent words will send armies into the face of death.

Encouraging words will fan the flame of genius of a Salman or a Jabir.

Powerful words will mould the public mind as the sculptor moulds his clay.

Words, spoken or written are a dynamic force.

Words are the swords we use in battles for success and happiness.

How others react towards us depends, in a large measure, upon the words we utter to them.

Life is a great whispering gallery that sends back echoes of the words we send out.

Our words are immortal - they go marching through the years in the lives of all those with whom we come into contact. They will survive us.



