

# Feeding the Spirit:

30 Days of  
Spiritual Practice  
for People of All  
Faiths During  
Ramadan 2009

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## What is Ramadan?

The Arabic root S-L-M means peace. Peace is that which comes about from surrendering to the will of the divine. Call the divine whatever name you choose, if you surrender to it, you are more likely to find peace.

The word Islam, i-S-L-a-M, is derivative of this root and thus means the act of finding peace through self surrender to the divine. Muslim or m-u-S-L-i-M is also derivative and is the term used for a person who has found peace through surrender to the divine.

It is important to understand this especially today when the original meanings of these words have been obscured by extremists, fear mongers, and ignorant people of all stripes. No matter what your faith, if you are a person who submits yourself to the will of the divine, you will find peace.

And that is what the month of fasting, Ramadan, is all about.

Ramadan falls on the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. In 2009 it will take place approximately from August 19 to September 19. The reason why it is approximate is that it is based upon the first sighting of the crescent moon during the ninth month. The Islamic calendar is based upon the moon rather than the sun as the Gregorian calendar is based. Since it is based on sightability, this is a great place to begin to think about this concept of submitting to the will of the divine. We must wait for the hand of God to reveal the start of this incredibly holy month. Man cannot predict this with any certainty.

Once the crescent moon is sighted, Ramadan begins at sunset the next day. It is a month of fasting, in which Muslims refrain from eating, drinking, and smoking from sunrise until sunset. Fasting is meant to teach patience, modesty and spirituality. Ramaḡān is a time to fast for the sake of the divine

and to acknowledge God more than usual. It is a time to ask forgiveness for past sins, pray for guidance and to learn that we are better than we know through self-restraint and good deeds.

Historically, Ramadan is seen as the time that the angel Gabriel revealed The Quran to the Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him) and also the time when the Muslims of Medina defeated the animists of Mecca.

## How the Ramadan Fast Works

For Muslims, the Ramadan fast involves depriving themselves of many of life's everyday pleasures. They are not allowed to eat or drink during the hours of daylight. Smoking and sexual relations are also forbidden during fasting. As the sun sinks below the horizon, the fast is broken with prayer and a meal called the *iftar*. In the evening following the *iftar* it is customary to visit with friends and neighbors in the community. The next morning as the sun comes up, the fast is resumed.

The Quran says:

*One may eat and drink at any time during the night "until you can plainly distinguish a white thread from a black thread by the daylight: then keep the fast until night"*

During the fast there is no eating or drinking during fasting times, no smoking or taking of illegal drugs, and no sexual activities.

Muslims believe that a woman having her menstrual period should discontinue the fast and resume it when menstruation is through.

The following five things will take any merit away from your actions during Ramadan:

- 1) Lying
- 2) Slander
- 3) Taking false
- 4) Talking behind someone's back
- 5) Coveting or being greedy

## **A Note on Fasting Safely**

Fasting can be extremely dangerous. Before beginning a fast be sure to clear it with your doctor.

The Quran recommends that certain people do not fast. These include pregnant women, small children, and those with medical conditions. These include diabetics and those who are suffering from nutritional deficiencies or are of a low body weight.

If you have other medical conditions or are taking medications, be sure to get clearance from your doctor.

Fast safely and you will enjoy the experience beyond anything you might imagine.

## **Day 1: Lesson 1**

*Every action must have a starting place and a goal.*

Sometimes in this fast paced world, it is hard to remember that life is not simply driving us. The seemingly impossible can be achieved but not unless we choose to embark upon a journey.

## **Day 2: Lesson 2**

*Fasting as a spiritual practice is about three things: being aware, compassion for others and free will.*

On the second day of Ramadan the body is still not used to the change of cycle. We become aware of what it feels like to actually listen to the body as it talks to us. Some of us will have never experienced hunger before. Becoming aware of what hunger feels like should make us compassionate towards those who are not eating because they cannot. We are blessed by the creator with the free will to step onto this path. Hopefully the lesson we learn is one of gratitude.

## Day 3: Lesson 3

*Removing indulgences from the diet makes us appreciate the simple things.*

As you go through the third day of fasting, listen to your body and that which it craves. Try to understand why it is that your body is telling you these things. Even though our bodies are rooted here in this reality, they are still able to give us great insight into the Creator.

Do you crave an ice cream cone because you are tired or because you are bored? Take the time to reflect during the day and when the sun goes down, instead of giving yourself a pint of Ben and Jerry's, why not instead give yourself a spoonful of yogurt? In this world of over consumption and mass produced products sometimes it is easy to lose sight of the fact that we can find just as much satisfaction in the simple as in the luxurious. In fact, during Ramadan, many people find

that the simple is more luxurious than anything else.

## Day 4: Lesson 4

*When we purify their bodies, we clarify their thoughts.*

Much of the food that we eat in the modern world is actually filled with poisons that not only affect the way our bodies feel, but also affect the way our brains work and our thoughts manifest.

Do not be surprised if during the course of the day, you come upon an insight into a behavior, problem, or belief. Your mind and body are freed from outside chemical influence during the time of fast.

Allah (God) created our bodies and our world to be perfect and function perfectly. Ramadan is a time to free ourselves of the influence of man and gain insight into the perfection that our creator used to build the remarkable machines we are.

## **Day 5: Lesson 5**

*Sacrificing meals for a fixed period makes us aware of the less fortunate and more likely to give them alms.*

Many of us walk through this world never experiencing what it is like to actually feel hunger or thirst. The truth is that hundreds of millions of people are plagued with shortages of water, shortages of food, and shortages of the means to acquire food or water.

As we fast and feel the longing within us to eat or drink, it is important to remember that while we are choosing this, others are not. Take time during Ramadan to pray for the less fortunate and if you are able to help them in a material way, do so.

In the process you will find yourself empowered to make the world a better place, a lesson that we are often forgetful of in a world in which it increasingly seems we have no control.



## **Day 6: Lesson 6**

*When you wander from the Creator, you usually end up in a bad situation.*

Ramadan is a time when we should endeavor to put ourselves back onto the path that the Creator has laid out for us. For many Muslims, there is a strong belief that everything that happens to us is preordained. This doesn't mean that we have no free will though. The free will we have been given is in how we choose to react to what life hands to us.

Allah, God, the Creator is a perfect being that provides us with all of the tools we need to find fulfillment in this life. Even the worst situation can be met with love, compassion, and understanding. It is when we respond with greed, jealousy, hatred, and violence that things become difficult.

Take the time during Ramadan to see how changing your reactions can change your life.

## **Day 7: Lesson 7**

*Use fasting as an antidote to obsessive body behavior.*

One of the things that marks obsessive behavior is the fact that the obsessed is usually blind to it. By creating blank spaces in days that would usually be filled with eating and drinking, we create the time to notice that which we are obsessed by. During Ramadan, we not only fast from food and drink but also from habits such as cigarettes, sex, and drugs.

You will be surprised how the absence of food and drink actually makes it easier to step away from other obsessive behaviors. The body and mind become so focused on the food and drink they desire that your other obsessions become much less important and thus easily recognized.

## Day 8: Lesson 8

*Fasting is a method that one can take up to find the 'middle path'.*

The Quran states that Allah sent thousands of messengers to all the people of the earth in all times and places. Nowhere are these messengers listed. Buddhism, in its purest philosophical form is amazingly similar to Islam. Certainly, the message of the Buddha was a message from Allah.

The middle path of the Buddha is concerned with the interaction between thoughts and behavior, and the relationship between behavior and its consequences. Fasting provides us with the opportunity to take the time to consider ourselves, our families, our communities, and our world and to find where the best place for each of us is in each of them.

## Day 9: Lesson 9

*Fine tune your fitrah, or moral compass.*

Muslims believe that Allah provided each of us with a tool to help guide us to a perfected life. This tool, called a fitrah, is like a moral compass. The problem is that in our increasingly ‘beep beep beep’ filled world, sometimes it is difficult to hear anything but noise.

All children are born perfectly in tune with the will of the Creator, it is only as we grow that we are moved away from that by parents, teachers, television, and the excess of our societies.

Take the time to explore your fitrah during Ramadan. On this ninth day, find a quiet place to sit and think. Escape the noise of the refrigerator, the beep beep of backing up trucks, and the voices of other people.

Listen to the radio transmitter the  
Creator has placed in you to hear his  
transmissions.

## Day 10: Lesson 10

*Discover the effects food has on you that you never had a clue about.*

By this point, you have probably been finding yourself with cravings for things that have surprised you. If you are like most people, you have indulged in those cravings when the sun has gone down. This is not a bad thing.

In fact, it is a good thing. It is especially good if you are able to tune into how those things make you feel. Did overeating take away your sense of delight? Did eating the fish you craved all day fill you with joy? Did drinking the lemonade you dreamed about all day make the ache in your back disappear?

Use the time of Ramadan to pay attention to your body. It is a perfected invention that we far too often ignore. Learn what makes your body function

better and what makes it function worse.

Learning the body is a spiritual lesson because it is this body that our spirit learns it's lessons in.

## Day 11: Lesson 11

*Cultivate your neutral observer.*

Our minds are the most fantastic recording devices ever devised. However, if you think that figuring out how to work the controls on a digital video recorder is difficult, then you are in for a surprise when you start looking at your own mind.

Our minds have the ability to tell us ‘what channel’ we are listening to or watching. They have the ability to tell us if a program is a ‘documentary’ or a ‘fictional drama’. The problem is that most of us have never bothered to read the user manual.

By the time we start to figure out that we have some control over ourselves there are already a hundred programs playing at once. The program of your gym instructor who used to tell you that ‘you can’t play sports’ or the program of your abusive parent that

told you that ‘you are stupid’ or the program of the bully who told you that ‘you’re ugly’.

And the problem is that most of us start to think those voices are really us. In fact, they are not. For some reason though, our brain doesn’t like to admit that we are not 100% in control. That is why we need to trick it.

Create a voice in your head that doesn’t judge. This is very important. If the voice says “that’s the coach and he is an asshole” the coach will find some way to shut the voice down. Instead, allow the ‘neutral observer’ to simply say “that is the coach.” Let this neutral observer give names to all your thoughts and you will soon find that there are many people influencing your actions. Amazingly, you will even discover the most shocking one of all, YOU!

It can’t be emphasized enough that you need to keep the observer neutral. Don’t allow it to judge. Simply give yourself the opportunity to give your

voice more weight than that of the coach, the parent, the teacher, or the bully. All you need to do is recognize where your thoughts have come from.

## Day 12: Lesson 12

*Start a gratitude journal.*

It is far too easy to think about what we lack and forget about what we have. Even a man being tortured can find something to be grateful for. “I’m grateful that I was not tortured yesterday” “I’m grateful that I once lay in the grass after it was freshly mowed.” Most of us endure some form of torture at some time in our lives whether it is mental, emotional, or physical. Take the time to write a few of these things down each day and when we are in those times of torture, we can turn to a book that tells us why this life is a blessing.

## **Day 13: Lesson 13**

*Discover just how much time you actually spend thinking about food, preparing food, and eating food.*

Many who fast for the first time find themselves amazed at the amount they accomplish during the fast. If we cannot eat, prepare food, or buy food we often find ourselves looking for something to do. This might be taking care of correspondence, reading a book, playing games with our families, taking a walk, fixing the car, cleaning the house, or calling an old friend.

One of the greatest gifts of Ramadan is the time we are given to take care of these things. Ramadan is a gift of time.

## **Day 14: Lesson 14**

*Tune into the source and discover energy beyond food and drink.*

People often expect that they will have no energy if they are not eating or drinking during the days of Ramadan. Much to their surprise, many people find that they actually have more energy. The body uses an enormous amount of energy to digest, process, and consume food and drink. When this energy is freed up, we find ourselves less tired, less exhausted, sleeping better, and thinking better.

In Hinduism, Western people have often found themselves amazed by tale of Yogis who subsist on what seems to be an insufficient amount of nourishment. What the Yogis have long known is that there is energy beyond food and drink. This energy comes from the Creator. It is in the

sun, the air, sounds, thoughts, and colors.

Look at all the sources of this energy and you will instantly develop a strong connection with the Creator. While it is impossible for us as human beings to understand the Creator, it is not beyond our ability to recognize the power of the cosmos and totality.

## **Day 15: Lesson 15**

*Develop your compassion for those who are hungry.*

One of the lessons that cannot be over-emphasized during Ramadan is that of coming to an understanding of what it is like to be hungry or thirsty. As we reach the midpoint of the fast, think of a way that you as an individual can make a difference in the life of a hungry person.

Perhaps you will donate food to a food bank, volunteer at a soup kitchen, or buy groceries for a family that is struggling in these difficult times. Not only can you feel good about the act of helping people in need, but you can also feel the power of compassion and how using it for the benefit of others can improve your life.

## **Day 16: Lesson 16**

*God wants you to ask questions.*

There are those in this world who will tell you that it is not okay to question the Creator. As a Muslim this can be especially frustrating when something occurs and the response is simply that it was the will of God. Yes, it was the will of God, but Allah wants us to learn the lessons of this world and if we do not ask why something happened, it is as if we have simply not attended school.

Why would a compassionate and perfect God allow so much suffering in this world? Why do good people often seem to suffer the awful quirks of fate? What possible good could come out of a natural disaster? These are the sorts of questions that the Creator wants us to ask. There are answers but if we do not look for them, it is likely that the lesson will go unlearned.

Hurricane Katrina, which all but destroyed the city of New Orleans allowed millions of people to feel compassion for their fellow human beings. It gave people the chance to see that there are a huge number of people in the world that want to do good. It provided the opportunity for the spiritual growth of a huge portion of the population. And maybe, it even gave an exceptional child the chance to move from a school where they might have gotten involved in drugs and gangs to a school where they can learn how to improve the lives of everyone on this planet.

Today, ask the Creator questions about hardships you have seen or heard about. Explore your own trials of this life and listen closely and you will certainly come to understand that there was more positive than negative that came from these events.

## **Day 17: Lesson 17**

*Transformation is painful and necessary.*

All things are born into perfection in this universe. Our bodies function exactly as they are supposed to. Natural systems keep themselves in balance. There is a necessity involved in even the most painful experience.

If it were the easiest thing to fulfill the will of the Creator, we would all do it. It would not even be a choice. Instead, Allah demands that we make decisions which are not easy. These decisions often are painful but are incredibly necessary. The reason they are necessary is because in order to transform ourselves from selfish creatures concerned only with ourselves into enlightened beings that are concerned with the good of the totality, we must put ourselves into situations that are not simply selfish and of the greatest benefit to ourselves.

Corporate CEO's may think they are pulling a fast one on us when they give themselves multi-million dollar bonuses, but if they were to put that money in the hands of the stock holders or to reinvest it into creating a company that is better for everyone, they would certainly find themselves more fulfilled than when they sit on a luxury yacht isolated from the source of all reality.

## Day 18: Lesson 18

*We're made to live in community.*

*We're made to love one another.*

Non-Muslims are often shocked when Muslims tell them that the time of fasting is their favorite time of the year. How in the world can a time of depriving yourself be so wonderful?

There are many reasons. First of all, until you are deprived, you cannot fully appreciate what you have. Second, Ramadan is a time when people share in a difficult task together. If only one person is struggling to overcome the desire to eat or drink, it is very difficult, but when a community is struggling together, there is a sense of solidarity and community support which grows between individuals.

Ramadan is a time when families, communities, and all Muslim's in the world share in a struggle to overcome

the desires of the body and mind.  
When those who are fasting share their  
empathy, compassion, and love with  
one another it creates a beautiful sense  
of togetherness. Imagine if the whole  
world were participating?

## Day 19: Lesson 19

*As long as you breathe, you are alive.  
Breath is life.*

Sometimes it's easy to start thinking that our bodies need to have food and water to survive. Certainly this is true in the long term, but people can go for extended periods without water, food, or both. One thing that you can't go without is oxygen. If you don't have oxygen, your body will shut down and stop functioning. Without breath you have no life.

The ancient Hawaiians understood this. The Hawaiian word 'Ha' means breath. In ancient Hawaii people would greet each other by exchanging a breath with an exhale while saying 'Ha'. To this day, Hawaiians greet each other with the word alo-HA, which is often translated as hello or goodbye. The word is more accurately translated as love or compassion for

your fellow human beings, those you share the breath of life with.

Imagine a world with no oxygen. There would be no breath. There would be no life. Christians say that God breathed life into the lifeless mud form of Adam and gave him life.

If we consider breath, oxygen, and life sacred, why do we allow our air to be destroyed and dirtied in the name of greed and money? On this day, consider how we are allowing the life the Creator gave us to slowly be extinguished by destroying the air we breathe.

## **Day 20: Lesson 20**

*Forgiveness is good for both sides of a wrong.*

The last ten days of Ramadan are considered to be the most powerful days of the entire holiday. It is during these ten days that the most extraordinary things happen. Muslims say that any actions taken during the last ten days and nights of Ramadan, have more merit than those of a thousand different days.

One of the lessons of Ramadan is that Allah (God) is forgiving and merciful no matter what it is that we have done provided that we are willing to change our ways and recognize the error of our ways. Why is it that Allah would choose to be so merciful and forgiving to those who willingly go against him?

It is because the Creator is a perfect being and recognizes that in order for us to learn the lessons of this

existence, we must have a perfect example of those lessons.

Forgiveness is not only good for the person who has done wrong, it is also good for the person who has been wronged. Carrying grudges, injustices, and hatreds for those who have injured us doesn't do any favors for us. It is these small things that destroy our ability to trust, our ability to love, and our ability to grow.

Just because you forgive someone doesn't mean that you need to allow them to wrong you again though. Until that person has sincerely recognized why they have done wrong and acknowledged that they will not do it again, they will carry their misdeeds with them. The point here is that you don't need to carry their misdeeds as well. Let them bear the burden of their own sins...and you can carry your own.

Ramadan is a time of apologizing for the wrongs we have done others and a time of forgiving the wrongs that have

been done to us. Both actions will uplift your soul and allow you to heal yourself and those you love.

## **Day 21: Lesson 21**

*Man is poor , Existence is rich.*

Every human being alive today will be dead in two hundred years. All of the material things we work for in this life, we will lose. They are simply on loan to us. We can't really own anything on this plane of existence. If you don't believe you will die, you are lying to yourself. If you think you can take it with you, you are lying to yourself even more. Man is poor.

Existence however is rich. We are a part of a tapestry of reality that extends from one side of the universe to the other. There are no empty spaces. As you hear the sound of a plane or a truck, there are no empty spaces between you and it. Sound, light, smell, and all other experiential senses are composed of matter being vibrated and sensed. One atom rests against another, against another, against another. You see colors because the

Creator has allowed you to sense the spectrum. You taste, touch, smell, hear, and feel because you are a part of this rich tapestry of existence.

Take a moment to consider how rich your existence is. In fact, you will never disappear, but the man or woman you think you are will.

## **Day 22: Lesson 22**

*Being a part of something higher than your self is exciting.*

We are all a part of the totality. Sometimes it is easy to start thinking that we are alone. The only consciousness in the universe. In fact, we are not alone at all. We, and everything else in the universe are connected. It is not just the fact that a butterfly flapping its wings in South America can cause a hurricane in New Orleans, but also a person opening their door, saying a kind word, or doing a good deed.

While you may not be able to see the results of your actions, there are results. You are an important part of the entire cosmos. You might make the decision today that is responsible for bringing joy to every living thing, or destroying every living thing.

Our choices have far reaching consequences. It's not just time travelers that have the chance to irrevocably change the future. Each of us does. If you were to travel back in time, wouldn't you be careful not to destroy the future you knew?

That is exactly what you are doing when you choose a cruel word over a kind one, a misdeed over one of merit, or a selfish action over a selfless one. You have more power than you think. Be responsible with it.

## **Day 23: Lesson 23**

*Everyone should share a sense of responsibility towards everyone else.*

With great power comes great responsibility. You have great power. You have the power to change the lives of everyone you meet in a positive or a negative way. When people say that God created us in the image of God, this could well be what they mean.

Sure, you can say nasty things about people. You can flip people off from your car. You can cut people off. You can interrupt. You can be nasty. You have this choice. You also have a responsibility towards your fellow beings.

There is no reason to deprive yourself or your family of what you need to survive, but can you really enjoy a \$500 meal while there are others that are starving? Can you live in a house

with twenty extra bedrooms when there are millions upon millions who are homeless? Can you stand idly by while knowing that you can make a difference?

You have free will. Today is a good time to see what you can do in a positive way with it and be grateful to the Creator for giving you the chance to do something good.

## **Day 24: Lesson 24**

*By taking responsibility for our situation, we make the world change.*

It's easy to blame others for our situation. We can blame our parents for the fact we don't know how to play the piano. We can blame our government for the fact we don't have a job. We can blame tobacco companies for the fact we have cancer. It's easy, but it is dishonest.

You don't play piano because you have not learned. You don't have a job because you have not found one. You have cancer because you chose to smoke or live with a smoker or go to smoky places.

A funny thing happens when you start taking responsibility for even the situations where we can claim the most innocence; we change from victims to survivors. There is a key difference between the two mentalities.

A victim is someone who is so weak that they have something done to them against their will. A survivor is someone who despite whatever is done to them, refuses to give in to despair, blame, or weakness. A survivor is strong, a victim is weak. The difference is taking responsibility.

It's as simple as that. Accept full and complete responsibility for your situation and you change the world completely. The difference is that a victim has fear while a survivor has knowledge. Imagine the difference in describing someone as a Rape Survivor instead of a Rape Victim. The key is that when you take credit for the bad, you also get full credit for the good. Survival takes strength.

## **Day 25: Lesson 25**

*We are all hungry for something besides food.*

As we reach the last days of Ramadan, something becomes clear that we should have known all along. It is not food alone that we are hungry for. We seek a sense of safety. We seek a sense of security. We seek a sense of comfort. Consider that times that most people eat. Certainly we sometimes eat because our body needs nourishment, but there are many different kinds of eating as well. Comfort food.

There are empty places in our modern souls that cannot be filled by food or drink. They cannot be filled with plasma TVs or big swimming pools. Pimping out your ride will not fill the empty space in your soul.

Only the Creator can fulfill us and for some reason in our increasingly connected and information filled

world, this message seems to have become obscured and lost. The creator fulfills our hunger when we act with loving compassion, empathy, and kindness. The Creator fulfills us when we acknowledge that we do not have all the answers. The Creator fulfills us when we look on all of Creation with wonder, amazement, and gratitude.

Look at the stars and fully realize how small, insignificant, and utterly amazing each living thing is in comparison with the entire Universe. Imagine one small baby in all the Universe. Insignificant and beyond wondrous at the same time.

## **Day 26: Lesson 26**

*Life without a purpose is life without living.*

Why are you here? Are you here to buy jet skis and motorcycles and then to die? Are you here to build pyramids and then to die? Are you here to sell insurance and then to die? Are you here to work in a nylon factory and then to die?

No. You are here to learn and then move on. You are here to make a difference and then to move on. You are here to discover the meaning of the entire Universe. You are here to recognize the Creator. You are here to make a tremendous difference.

You are not here to live a material life and die. You are here to live a spiritual life and then live. You have a purpose if you are willing to look for it.

## Day 27: Lesson 27

*All existence is written by a larger hand.*

Those who claim that there is no God are ignoring all the evidence in the Universe. Perhaps there is no God that is an old man in a lab coat. There is no God that looks like George Burns. There is no God that is anything that we can begin to understand.

God is incomprehensible. God is everything. God has neither name nor sex nor color nor form. God is. The word *Allah* is not a name. *Lah* is indicative of there being one God, one Universe, one totality. In Arabic, the word is indicative of female. *Al* indicates one and only and describes a male word. Put the two together and you have *Allah*. The one and only God that is neither male nor female and that cannot be described except through his 99 attributes, also known as the 99 most beautiful names of God.

It is this hand that has written existence and left a signature in clear sight for anyone to see. The Universe is composed of mathematics and geometric shapes. One among many shapes is known as the 'golden spiral' and is the basis for tornados, whirlpools, the human ear, tonal structure, sea shells, growth patterns of leaves on plants, and even chemical molecular structures.

This is not a random Universe. It is not an accident. The hand of the Creator has shaped it to a purpose.

## Day 28: Lesson 28

*We commit wrongdoings. There is no shame in owning up to them.*

There are no secrets from the Source. There are no perfect people. Each of us have made errors and will continue to do so. The Creator knows this. The Creator will forgive us for these misdeeds.

Perhaps admission of your misdeeds to your fellow flawed human beings would cause more harm than good. You do not have to do so. You only have to admit the truth and acknowledge that you have done wrong to the Creator.

In admitting your wrongs, you stop hiding your misdeeds not only from God but also from yourself. Only then can you begin to live the life you were meant to lead. Otherwise, you are living a lie.

## **Day 29: Lesson 29**

*If you move past pain you find joy.*

Pain is often difficult to deal with. Suffering in this world can seem unbearable. Sometimes it seems that the burdens of this life will never go away.

They always do though. Pain is a gift from the Creator that allows each of us to prove that we are worthy of finding joy. Suffering allows each of us to move up to the next level of mindful, spiritual, and fulfilling existence.

Only when you endure the pain, will you find the pleasure. When you fast each day, sometimes it seems unbearable. You are thirsty, you are hungry, you feel tired, or you feel weak. And yet, if you suffer through, you agonizingly wait for sundown, and then when you are surrounded by family and friends and you know that

you did it. You survived, you made it!  
You deserve to enjoy the cool  
lemonade, the savory lamb, and the  
crisp tangy vegetables. You have  
found the joy.

The same is true of all suffering and all  
pain. On the other side is joy. As long  
as you know this, you will always  
succeed.

## **Day 30: Lesson 30**

*The path we follow doesn't always lead to the destination we expect.*

The final day of Ramadan is a day of excitement and joy. We have almost reached our destination.

When we begin a journey we usually start with expectations of what will occur, what we will see, who we will meet, and what we will do when we arrive. By the time we arrive at our destination, we may have changed so much from the journey itself that the original goals and expectations no longer have the same meaning.

In fact sometimes, the journey itself will have become more important than the destination. On this final day of Ramadan, it is important to look at the reasons we chose to embark upon this fast, the things we have learned along the way, and to orient ourselves to where we have arrived.

Chances are that you have learned more than you ever expected to. Certainly you have learned more than the simple words in this book would convey by themselves. Now the question is, what will you do with it?

## Breaking the Fast

For Muslims, the three days following Ramadan are anticipated and looked forward to throughout the year. It is a time of great joy and celebration. It is called, Eid ul-Fitr. *Eid* means festival while *Fitr* means the end of the fast. So Eid ul-Fitr is actually the festival of the end of the fast. For three days, you can indulge yourself with all the things you wanted to eat and drink for the previous month. You deserve it.

Don't be surprised though if you find yourself feeling like you would rather keep going until sunset keep feeling as good as Ramadan made you feel.