

Farah

10th annual virtual magazine

And He found you lost and
guided you.

Surah Duha 93.7



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Editorial

Welcome to the 10th issue magazine of Farah.

Farah is an annual virtual magazine that aims to communally inspire with a social and emotional nature of human endeavour to spiritually and morally develop through the written bodies of wisdom, knowledge and guidance.

Ramadan is a month of unity, contemplation and disciplinary action that is an essence of collective to our approach and conduct in this temporary life.

This year, like every year, the purpose of our projects under the umbrella of Farah Saeed Trust, a voluntary, non-profit organisation is to maintain the momentum of continuing her legacy. However, the aim of this year's magazine is to uniquely address a traditional element as a form of commemoration to an infinite friend, daughter, wife, sister and model in society.

Farah was born in Mosul, Iraq before she and her family moved to the UK. The cultural attitude towards Ramadan has proponents of congregation with family, prayer, and delicious food with axiomatic and loving memories. During the blessed month of Ramadan, please remember her family in your fond prayers.

The Farah Saeed Trust



The importance of Guidance

Around the world, there is a diverse variation of religions and those of no religion where there is essentialism of respect for humanitarian concern. However, the Muslim population comprises billions of people and as a Muslim individual it is paramount to express my sincere love with sincerity for my faith through literary works and have a social and ethical responsibility to respect all humankind with integrity as per the original aim and objective since publishing on a public platform.

The Arabic term for guidance is Hidayah and, every human nature needs guidance that forms an organisational framework for thinking, directionality and focused action to be a better being as we face a growing heterogeneity of life challenges that examine our patience and character. Finding our purpose, education, relationships, and employment are among the aspects of life we may require help, support and advice to progress in the right way (Parankimalil, 2015). It may require a strong and trusting relationship, for example, a parent, sibling, spouse or close friend with whom you can comfortably communicate without judgment.

A theoretical paradigm plays a pivotal role in re-dressing a therapeutic strategy, notably Sholen's Model of Guidance. It comprises three consecutive stages: relationship building, exploration of issues and concerns and a practical plan for change (Jain, 2023). A series of open-ended questions and active listening will allow one to subjectively discuss and try to design and create practical goal settings to overcome obstacles and to show intrinsic potentiality in making an informed choice that serves the best interests of happiness and growth (Jain, 2023).



However, despite their effectiveness, a religious element towards guidance is necessary. The epicentre of establishing this affluent notion is primarily achieved through the Quran provided by Allah (The Most High) and the Sunnah which are the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). The philosophy of guidance can be nurtured through advice, attention, to do good and forbid evil, the parables and lessons from the eminent Prophets (peace be upon them). In each segment of our five daily prayers, we plead to Allah (The Most High) to be guided to the straight path, upon reciting the first chapter of the Glorious Quran, Surah Al-Fatiyah (The Opening). Sirat Al-Mustaqeem (A straight path) can be described as straight and can be travelled with ease due to it being a wide, familiar, space and going to the desired destination.

In the blessed month of Ramadan, we should all try to aggregate the two greatest forms of religious guidance that have been bestowed upon us to seek guidance with a truism. The renowned inspiration Ibn Al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy upon him) described four types of hidayah that are sequentially connected: the first concept is the broad consensus of hidayah where knowledge and guidance are given by the ultimate Creator who has designed all nature and inanimate objects (The Faith, 2024). In Surah Taha:

“He answered, Our Lord is He Who gave each thing its form and then guided (it)”.

[Glorious Quran, Surah Ta-Ha 20:50]



The second form of hidayah requires educational attainment and clarity in differentiating good and evil, harmony and antagonism, conflict and agreement. The necessity of hidayah is integrated by the following verse:

“And thus We have revealed to you an inspiration of Our command. You did not know what the Book or [what is] faith, but We have made it a light by which We guide whom We will of Our servants. And indeed. [O Muhammad], your guide to a straight path.”

[Glorious Quran, Surah Ash-Shura (The Consultation) 42:52]

The third type of Hidayah is driven through a special form of divine guidance and inspiration known as Tawfiq and Ilham in Arabic to sustainably achieve the essence of faith (iman) and submission (Islam). Allah (The Most High) states in the following verse:

“Thus does Allah leave astray whom He wills and guides whom He wills.”

[Glorious Quran, Surah Al-Muddathir (The Cloaked One) 74:31]

In another verse, the Almighty states:

“No disaster strikes except by permission of Allah. And whoever believes in Allah He will guide his heart. And Allah is Knowing of all things.”

[Glorious Quran, Surah At-Taghabun (The Mutual Disillusion) 64:11]



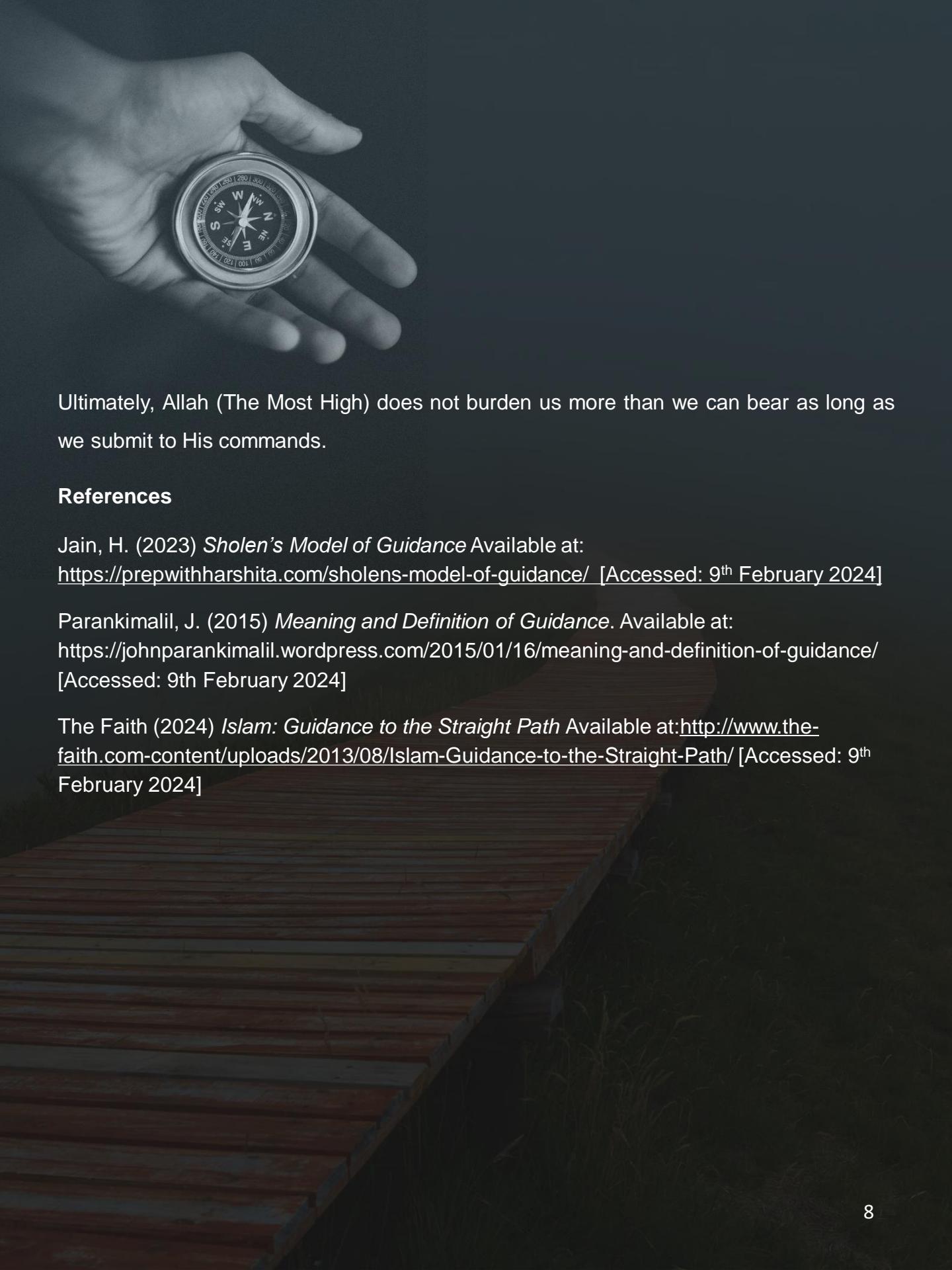
The fourth type of hidayah focuses on the aftermath – the next life and how to seek the bountiful Paradise where there is no form of worry.

“And We will have removed whatever is within their breasts of resentment, (while) flowing beneath them are rivers. And they will say, “Praise to Allah, who has guided us to this; and we would never have been guided if Allah had not guided us. Certainly, the messengers of our Lord had come with the truth” And they will be called, “This is Paradise, which you have been made to inherit for what you used to do.”

[Glorious Quran, Surah Al-A`raf (The Heights) 7:43]

As we can highlight from each form of guidance, we can establish the power control that the Almighty possesses and submit to His commands whose foundation has concrete wisdom of His knowledge of the seen and what is yet to be seen (The Faith, 2024). His facilitative role in every matter when we communicate with Him is through prayer and supplication. He is the turner of the hearts; however, it is important to recognise that we need to make the initial effort to make the change.

There are many misconceptions in contemporary society where there is some form of ignorance or comparative analysis of our errors per se. We need to try to develop empathy in our social interactions so there is always hope for a relative positive change and to remember one another in each other's thoughts and prayers. We will all be accountable so let us guide one another towards goodness for we will all have to answer for our actions.



Ultimately, Allah (The Most High) does not burden us more than we can bear as long as we submit to His commands.

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Tips on how to complete reading the Quran

Recitation of the Glorious Quran during the blessed month of Ramadan is one of the methodologies to help purify souls and increase our connection with the Almighty. The Quran itself is an invaluable treasure and serves as guidance for all. We are encouraged to efficiently contemplate during this month for His Mercy, His Forgiveness and Protection from the Hellfire through prayer, fasting, giving charity, supplication (Dua), reading the Quran and performing good actions to see His reward, help and salvation. Many of us vary in our commitment to what we can do and a sincere intention is vital to demonstrate our faith. This could be due to work, travel, health and family commitments, however, the essentialism that Ramadan brings to humanity allows us to prioritise and not miss this golden opportunity.

There are several etiquettes when reciting the Quran and the Almighty has advised:

“and recite the Quran clearly with tartil (distinct and measured tone)”

[Surah Al-Muzzamil (The Enshrouded One) 73:4]

This comprises reading the Quran with beautification and understanding the science of the Quran (Tajweed) that brings peace and tranquillity and softens our hearts (Shahinda, 2020). Understanding what Allah (The Most High) is trying to explain and the message He is trying to give is an uplifting experience that instils curiosity, especially through translation. To help motivate reading the Quran, one may congregate by attending the mosque, family circles, or friend circles or using a tape/CD to listen and repeat after the Sheikh’s recitation (Suliman, 2012).

There is always a way to overcome limitations that requires a realistic plan around your routine and remaining steadfast. The consciousness of success is achieved with the aid of the Almighty who is aware of the Unseen. Many people are aware of the theoretical and emotional infrastructure that the Quran brings but find it difficult to find a practical way in which a dream or goal can become a reality.

There are 30 chapters in the 600 pages of the Quran and Ilmfeed (2016) has shared a technique in how a minimum of one recital can completely do. Please minimise setbacks and ensure we can all try to aim easily to complete the Quran during the month of Ramadan.

Number of Qurans completed	Fajr	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghrib	Isha
One	4	4	4	4	4
Two	8	8	8	8	8
Three	12	12	12	12	12
Four	16	16	16	16	16

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The essence of true friendship

أُبُو سَعْدٍ

Friendship is among the important relationships that one possesses after spirituality and family. Stability, support, honesty and integrity are among the key concepts for a healthy friendship that protects us from the negative effect of adverse experiences of internalizing behaviours and instils motivation towards goodness (Guroglu, 2022). Human nature is described as ultrasocial constructs whose lives are a balance of social, psychological and physical well-being (Anderson and Fowers, 2019). Neuroimaging studies suggest that friendships contribute to multiple psychosocial adjustments to well-being through motivation, lowering the incidence of depression, higher academic achievement and longevity. This is achieved through defined sections of the brain namely; the medial prefrontal cortex, ventral striatum, ventromedial prefrontal cortex and temporoparietal junction where the neural patterns in the context of friendships are correlational and integrate several behavioural measures: social competence, stability, resilience, positive mental health outcomes which strengthens with time (Guroglu, 2022).

The comprehensive definition of friendship by the theoretical literature suggests it is a state that comprises intimacy, trust, esteem and affection between two people (Berger et al., 2017). To understand the many phenomena embedded within this form of social network, an insight into my friendship with Farah (may Allah rest her soul) will be discussed.



أَبُو بَكْرٍ

A model example of one of the eminent companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Abu Bakr (may Allah have mercy upon him) will be reflected upon in this article. The quality and intensity of their dyadic social relationship was a school to learn and excel whose reciprocated affection was a form of a buffer that provided emotional support, and life satisfaction and was interchangeable with happiness as a hedonic form of well-being (Anderson and Fowers, 2019). The quantitative dimension of friendship may be associated with the duration or length of the relationship and the frequency of interactions. The qualitative measure of friendship is composed of having a mutual concern and social, practical and emotional support (Amati *et al.*, 2018). The general trend is the closer the friendship, the more qualitative attributes of friendship are revealed.

The Aristotelian perspective of friendship or *philia* defies the general concept of life satisfaction as an essence of friendship and expands the view of this social interactional sphere into three characteristics: utility, pleasure and virtue (Anderson and Fowers, 2019). Pleasure and utility are strongly correlated to hedonic wellbeing whereas virtue is adhered to eudaimonic wellbeing. This collective growth will enrich the affective processes of the relationship and surpass all odds. Utility friendships comprise a social exchange to help and strengthen one another.





The primary value of pleasure friendships is to provide enjoyment and an increased release of endorphins through engaging in hobbies, sports and interests. However, Aristotle (1999) viewed virtuous friendship as the best form of social relation as it distinctively admired one another good qualities, observed the value of their shared interests, wanted the best for one another for their friend's sake and the experience of pleasure was secondary. This suggests how friendship has distinctive features and its stability depends on its intention and goal setting.

Friendship serves as an emotional and supportive value and has never been a form of a business transaction, attention or ego-centred relation. It is symbolically built on trust, understanding, and happiness with positive developmental outcomes. My friendship with Farah began at the tender age of 14 whilst she was studying Clinical Sciences at an anonymised university. Her friendly character, love for her family and friends, spirituality, love for the Quran and other characteristics were amongst her highlights and were reasons why our friendship lasted for a long period and will continue in thoughts and prayer. We were not close but we maintained contact and asked for one another from time to time regardless of where we resided and how busy we were – this was the power of friendship and longevity. There was limited to what I could do to support my friend whilst she was diagnosed with cancer.



أَبُو حَمْزَةَ

I wanted to demonstrate the sincerity of my friendship with prayer, and charity events and remain in contact to alleviate the emotional distress she had undergone and to motivate her besides her family and other friends to fight this trial with faith and patience. This was achieved by organising community initiatives on a local and global scale with registered UK charities and I was inspired by the following hadith:

'The true friend is only he who regards his friend in three situations: ordeal, absence, and death'

[Nahjul Balagha]

'Amr ibn Abasah reported: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

'Allah Almighty said: My love is a right upon those who befriend each other for my sake.

My love is a right upon those who defend each other for my sake

[Al-Mujam Al-Saghir, 1092]

My duty as a friend is to continue and revive her legacy of kindness, integrity and helping others so she will never be forgotten. Trust has many definitions and the term Trust to me is about love, commitment, stability and advice.



أَبْرَاجُ

Just like any true nature of a friend, we always seek each other's advice and until death do part, what she confided to me all these years will be embedded with me because this is what true friendship is about. She was a sister and teacher to me that I could count on and whilst undergoing chemotherapy, she asked about my exams and these moments are unforgettable.

People deal with loss differently and as a friend, I wanted to ensure to take the positive out of this cancer trial to do well in the community as sadaqa jariyah (continuous charity) and raise awareness of cancer. Sadaqa jariyah is an action of continuous giving and this is achieved through sponsoring orphans, spreading knowledge, building water wells, building mosques, schools, and hospitals and distributing the Quran. These examples of projects suggest the necessity to make positive contributions towards society and maintain equity. The investment of time, effort and donations towards such causes is not driven without being noticed by the Almighty who will reward all those who partake in these positive missions. To maintain social cohesion and keep all those who prayed and cared for Farah, projects were published on a public platform for authenticity.

Over the years, many brothers and sisters in humanity have tried to transiently help in these projects and others have shown intensive support in their spare time.



أَبُو بَكْرٍ

The length of support conducted was immeasurable and can only be rewarded and accepted by the Almighty Allah. Stability is essential and all praise to the Lord, a few brothers and sisters remain to this date wanting to facilitate in these voluntary community projects. If this form of trial happened to any of my friends, I would have taken the same approach because of the true existence and value of friendship without expecting anything in return.

Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq (may Allah have mercy upon him) was a close companion of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) who was known for his honesty and upright character (Achmat, 2023). He had an innate nature of being able to differentiate between good and evil and was charitable (Achmat, 2023). His full name was Abdullah ibn Abi Quhafah and was two years younger than the Prophet (peace be upon him). Their friendship was born when he was the neighbour of Khadijah and Muhammad. Their friendship blossomed before the advent of the Prophet's missions. He was the first man to believe in the prophecy of Muhammad (peace be upon him) which was revealed to him on Mount Hira (Qassem, 1999). He did not hesitate and declared his faith immediately. This was uniquely addressed in comparison to other companions who took some time to consider the Prophet's message (Al-Mubarakpuri, 77).



أَبُو بَكْرٍ

Abu Bakr (may Allah have mercy upon him) wanted to protect, provide comfort and make sacrifices. There are many events from the biography of the Prophet (peace be upon him) where this was presented. For example, 'Uqbah' ibn Abi Mu'it attempted to strangle the Prophet (peace be upon him) with a cloth around his neck as he saw the Prophet praying in the Kaabah. Abu Bakr happened to pass by and pushed Uqbah aside and released the cloth (Qassem, 1999). As a result, Abu Bakr was beaten unmercifully but disregarded his well-being and was relieved to save his friend. This was one of many exemplary approaches that heighten his character and profile as a prominent historical figure who values friendship to the core. This suggests why he was amongst the ten promised to enter paradise (Ashara Mubasharin) alongside Umar ibn Al-Khattab, Uthman bin Affan, Ali bin Abu Talib, Talha Ibn Ubaidullah, Zubair Ibn Al-Awwam, Abdur Rahman Bin Auf, Saad Ibn Abi Waqqas, Saeed Ibn Zayd, and Abu Ubaida ibn Al-Jarrah.

Other events also resemble the love of their friendship, for example, he defended and verified him when there were speculations from the community of the Prophet's night journey to Jerusalem. Those who had weak faith were in doubt because an explanation is beyond human reason. His patronymic name, Abu Bakr was added with the title As-Siddiq which is defined as the verifier of truth (Al-Mubarakpuri, 150-51).



أَبُو بَكْرٍ

Another event was when Abu Bakr comforted his friend when they hid in a cave on their journey to Madinah. 'Have no fear, for Allah is with us'. This form of reassurance is a good example of positive motivation and unleashing any form of fear and anxiety by reminding of the divine power of God. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was fond of Abu Bakr and often referred to him as Khalil whose Arabic term is the closest friend. This is in uniformity to Khalil being given to Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) which revealed the reversed status of friendship.

Other events in how Prophet Abu Bakr helped his friend were when the Prophet fell ill and Abu Bakr took the position for prayer (Qassem, 1999). Abu Bakr tried to strengthen the faith and have emotional control when the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) passed away.

"Whoever worshipped Mohammed, then Mohammed is dead, but whoever worshipped God, then God is Ever-living and shall never die."

Overall, there is no limit to what a friendship comprises and Abu Bakr is an inspirational figure for trying to help and support his friend in countless events serving the Almighty. Friendship is more than words, symbols and codes, having practical approaches and effort maintains the integrity of its foundation.





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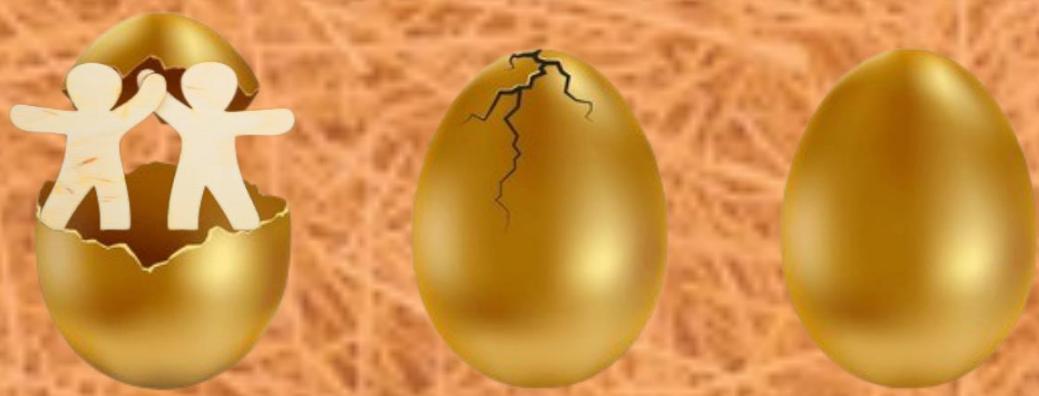
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أَبْوَادْ



The History of Dates

The date fruit has been cultivated for several millennia and holds a cultural similitude across the globe. The taxonomical status of the date palm is *Phoenix dactylifera* whose species name *dactylifera* originates from the Greek phrase for date 'daktylos' and the verb 'fero' (Rahmani *et al.* 2014). Archaeobotanical evidence suggests its native origin was discovered around the Persian Gulf, Western India, Mesopotamia (Southern Iraq), Arabian Peninsula and North Africa before disseminating to other demographic locations notably Burkina Faso West Africa, Spain, Mexico, California, Pakistan and Turkey that hold a hot climate with sufficient water availability and other environmental adaptations (Kwaasi, 2003; Begum, 2023; Krueger, 2021; Rahmani *et al.* 2014). It is estimated there are more than 200 varieties of the palm family whose main forms are Khudri, Sukkary, Ajwa, Hilali, Khalas, Ruthana, Sefri, Segae and Munifi (Rahmani *et al.* 2014). There is cultural, medicinal and spiritual value within these date fruits and is explored in this article.

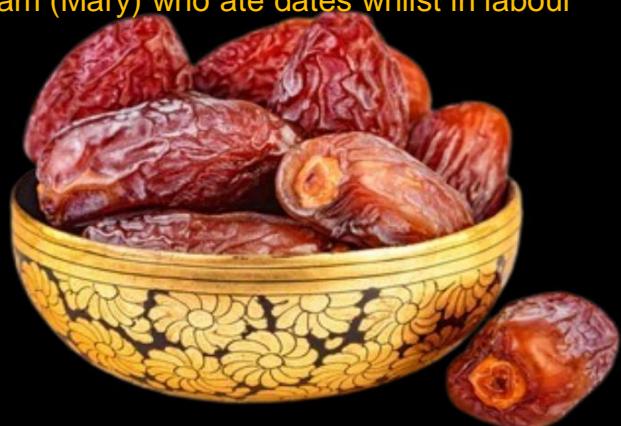
Phoenix dactylifera have distinctive anatomical features in its arborescent, evergreen flowering tree whose height can maximally grow 23 metres tall, leaves growing 4-6 m with 150 leaflets and can survive around 100 years (Al-Shwyeh, 2019; Begum, 2023). It predominantly grows within arid and sandy environments whose temperature exceeds 50°C with large volumes of water. Its robust body can also survive cold temperatures and saline conditions for short periods for its growth and production (Krueger, 2021; Begum, 2023).



The largest producer of the fruit is Egypt which exported 1.7 million tonnes of dates in 2021 followed by Saudi Arabia and Iran (Begum, 2023).

There are five consecutive growth phases to achieve the sweet taste of the date fruits filled with aroma: hababouk, kimri, bisri/khalal, rutab and tamr (Al-Shwyeh, 2019). The hababouk is a slow-growing phase of the date fruit which lasts 4 to 5 weeks (Farag, 2016). The moisture content is 85-90% during this phase. There is a rapid increase in the weight of the date fruit during 6 to 10 weeks in the kimri stage. This is followed by a decreased rate of growth until successively reaching the bisr or khalal phase. The khalal stage is a transformation of the fruit colour of the date fruit from green to yellow or red. The weight gain and moisture content begin to slow down and decrease to 50-55% whereas the sugary abundance proportionally increases. The high content of sugars comprising glucose, sucrose and fructose allows preservation and water content to alter the date fruit in the dried form (Smith and Somerset, 2003). The duration of the khalal phase can be extended by the addition of calcium formulation after harvest and by alternating the preservation method (Farag, 2016). The dates become half-ripened, and soft and can convert to light brown in the rutab stage. The moisture content is further reduced to 35-40% until the sharp taste disappears. During the final stage of the tamr, the date begins to dry as the fruit moisture is further reduced to 20-25%. Similarly, the water content is decreased and contains about 50% sucrose sugars or more if the temperature is highly sustained (Farag, 2016).

During the month of Ramadan, the date fruit is consumed to break our fasts and has been mentioned 22 times within the Quran, namely Maryam (Mary) who ate dates whilst in labour with Prophet Isa (Jesus) peace be upon him.



In the Glorious Quran, Allah (The Most High) states:

'Shake the trunk of the palm tree towards thee: it will drop fresh, ripe dates upon thee. Eat, then, and drink, and let thine eye be gladdened!'

[Quran, Surah Maryam, 19:25-26]

At Christmas and on Palm Sunday, dates are eaten by most Christians where it was hypothesised to have been used in Jesus's triumphant entry into Jerusalem in the Synoptic Gospels, New Testament (Kwaasi, 2003). It has also been referenced by the book of Psalms where the righteous will be flourished like a palm tree (Kwaasi, 2003). Jews also eat dates, which suggests that the date fruit holds great significance in many religions (Smith and Somerset, 2003; Kwaasi, 2003).

The date fruit holds a symbolic practice in many cultures where it is characterised by gratitude and generosity in solemnised weddings in Southeast Asia, ceremonies, Mediterranean cuisines and festivals. It is a substitute for refined forms of sugar and can be applied as a flavouring agent in baking desserts, cakes and biscuits (Lasania and Keeka, 2006). In some cultures, the stones are removed from the dates and are filled with almonds, cashews or walnuts as a formative display (Begum, 2023). This reflects the old Arabic saying which states:

'The uses of dates are as many as days in the year'

(Begum, 2023).



In Eastern cultures, consuming dates was encouraged for pregnant women to ease labour and decrease the rate of bleeding. The tenderness of dates was rubbed across the palate of newborn babies as good luck for their new life (Begum, 2023). Many cultures have fuelled their creativity in architecture and building constructions. The trunks of the tree were used to make roofs and light building works whereas the leaves were for designing screens, rugs and baskets. The seeds are used in animal feed and prayer beads (Begum, 2023).

Dates are a prominent source of fibre, vitamins, and minerals (calcium, potassium, magnesium, iron and zinc) with high energy content (Al-Shwyeh, 2019; Arnoni and Berry, 2015). This reflects its multiple therapeutic purposes in preventing infectious diseases caused by bacteria and fungi. The date fruit has anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant properties. Inflammation is a defence mechanism against infections, toxins, allergens and burns. An imbalance of the inflammatory process leads to the development of many diseases. Antioxidants are chemicals that can deactivate free radicals that prevent harm (Rahmani *et al.* 2014). It can also be valuable in tackling cancer, liver disorders, diabetes, and diseases of the throat, digestive, heart and lungs effectively and safely without adverse effects.

The unique constituents of the date fruits can also help in the management of fertility where there is evidence that suggests an increase in the concentration of date palm pollen extract (DPP) beyond 120 mg/kg has been shown to prevent reproductive issues and strengthen the sperm and male fertility (Rahmani *et al.* 2014).



The economic burden will be alleviated. Moreover, ajwa dates have particularly been highlighted for their health benefits and have been documented by the following hadith.

Saud (may Allah have mercy upon him) narrated that he heard the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) state

'If somebody takes seven Ajwa dates in the morning, neither magic nor poison will hurt him that day'

[Hadith, al-Bukhari]

Overall, the ripened state of the date fruit holds great optimism in health, culture and spirituality where it provides energy, strength, good health and social nature. The nutritious and filling nature of the date fruit suggests why it is considered amongst the most prominent crops to research and further exploration in its traditional and medicinal applications could be explored.



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An insight into the Iraqi culture during Ramadan

The tangible excitement for Ramadan in Iraq is unique in its operationalization and I wanted to explore the culture of my friend Farah, her love for *dolma* (stuffed vegetables), *klecha* and other attainable aspirations which she would do with her amazing mother and siblings. Iraq is known for its historical and beautiful traditions where human civilisation initially took shape and conundrum beyond borders. The stocking for the kitchen pantry (*Moona*) takes place before Ramadan (Sharif, 2024). Other countries in the Levant pronounce it as *mooneh* or *mooni* and the aim is to provide ease during the month of Ramadan to do shopping especially when the climate is hot. This has been a tradition since the older days to prepare food for homemade dishes in gatherings with family, friends and the community. Dried lime (*Noomi Basra*), flour, sugar, fruits, legumes, rice, oil and vermicelli noodles (*Sha'riyya*), nuts, *baharat* (a special Iraqi spice mixture) and dried fruits (*turshana*) and nuts are commonly purchased (Sharif, 2024). Besides storing ingredients, drying, making sauces and pickling foods especially pickled mango (*amba*) are also conducted during the blessed month of Ramadan. Other preparations include *kubba* (meat filled with minced meat and pine nuts), *kubbat burghul* (stuffed Bulgur dough discs), *Kubbat Halab* (stuffed rice dough discs), *poteta chap* (potato dough discs) and *boureg* (stuffed and thin sheets of dough). This highlights the range of dishes elaborated within the Iraqi culture.



The ancient open bazaars in Iraq have an arousing atmosphere of excitement and happiness in their colourful lights, storytellers (*qassakhoun*), narrow alleys and abundance of choice especially the *Al-Shorja* medieval bazaar in Baghdad (Nasrallah, 2013). Not many people have a large appetite for *Sohour* (meal before fasting) are common bread with cheese, fruits, wheat porridge (*hareesa*), lentil soup and light beverages such as tea and water (Sharif, 2024). During iftar (breaking the fast after sunset), the family congregate together and is accustomed to having a few dates with the dairy milk that provides the needed nourishment and lowers blood sugar levels. Nawashif i.e. dry dishes, for instance, *dolma*, *kebab* and *kubba* are commonly served with rice or thareed. Thareed are pieces of flatbread in stew liquid with lamb squares on the bone all over it (Sharif, 2024). This would help replenish lost liquids and curries are also served sometimes. A common drink that also helps to quench thirst and has a refreshing aroma is Qamar id-deen (dried apricots).

Communal gatherings in the evening would involve desserts, for instance, the date-filled pastry called *klecha* and tea (Hawzah News Agency, 2020). With family, a common traditional game that takes place after sunset is the *Al-Siniya* which involves a dice and tray and the muhabis ring game. This universally occurs in Baghdad, Karbala and Basra. The muhabis game involves 40 to 250 people often from different neighbourhoods who take turns to conceal the mihibes or ring. The team leader who holds the ring is draped in a blanket. The other members must sit with their fists tight in their laps whilst the leader passes the ring to one of the others in secret.



The opponents need to determine which of the men has the ring based on their body language (Hawzah News Agency, 2020). The guessing attempts continue until it is deducted to the one who has the ring. The penalty involved a sweet tray of *baklawa* and *zlabya* (sweet fritters) brought by the losing group to be shared with all. Another traditional aspect that brings social cohesion is to hold group iftars in different cities to feed poor people in those respective areas. This suggests how the concept of cultural capital influenced their social well-being besides the spiritual elements that take place in Ramadan rooted in faith, prayer and fasting (Sharif, 2024).

'Ramadan is not the month for cooking or tasting experimentations, period. After long hours of fasting, people usually crave comfort foods, and expect to be pampered with the delicious traditional foods they have been dreaming of all day.'

Professor Nawal Nasrallah

Delights from the Garden of Eden: A Cookbook and History of the Iraqi Cuisine.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Juggling between pregnancy and ibaadah (worship) in Ramadan

By Nusayyah Aumeer

Since I was a young child, writing has always been my passion. In 2015, I successfully wrote and released "*Forever in my heart*," my first short story on Wattpad.

Since then, I've pursued writing through my Instagram Islamic page (A Committed Soul). Alhamdulillah (All Praise to Allah), I've been contributing to the Farah magazine since 2020. I also contribute to other blogs on social media.

My primary goal in writing is to hopefully spread messages of goodness that the community will find useful. I write from personal experiences and place a strong emphasis on the greatness of Allah (The Most High) and the Islamic faith.

I always try to breathe in positivity from life incidents so I become positive to the world through my words and actions.

Hope, kindness, respect, empathy and love are my go-to words.

A Committed  soul

@a_committ soul



The holy month of Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic lunar calendar. This month is unlike other months. It is a blessed month filled with blessings, worship, service and spiritual development. Muslims around the globe wait impatiently for Ramadan so that they can benefit from its unlimited barakah. In the month of Ramadan, fasting is prescribed for every male and female who reached the age of puberty and is exempted to the sick, the old, the travellers, the breastfeeding and pregnant women. But those who cannot fast should pay Fidya, a charitable form of compensation for the missed fasts, to the less fortunate. That is how beautiful Islam is. Allah does not burden anyone, rather He provides solutions for any given circumstance.

Pregnant women often find fasting to be as difficult as other related worships like standing in tarawih prayers and visiting the mosque. They feel guilty that they cannot accomplish their worship like everyone else and that they are missing the rewards of the beautiful Ramadan. But it's not true, because Allah wouldn't burden any of His Servants.



فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعَدَّهُ مِنْ أَيَّامِ أُخْرَى ۚ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِي يَمْهُودَةٍ طَعَامٌ مِسْكِينٌ ۗ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ حَيْرًا فَهُوَ حَيْرٌ لِلَّهِ ۚ وَأَنَّ تَصُومُوا حَيْرًا لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

The Quran states.

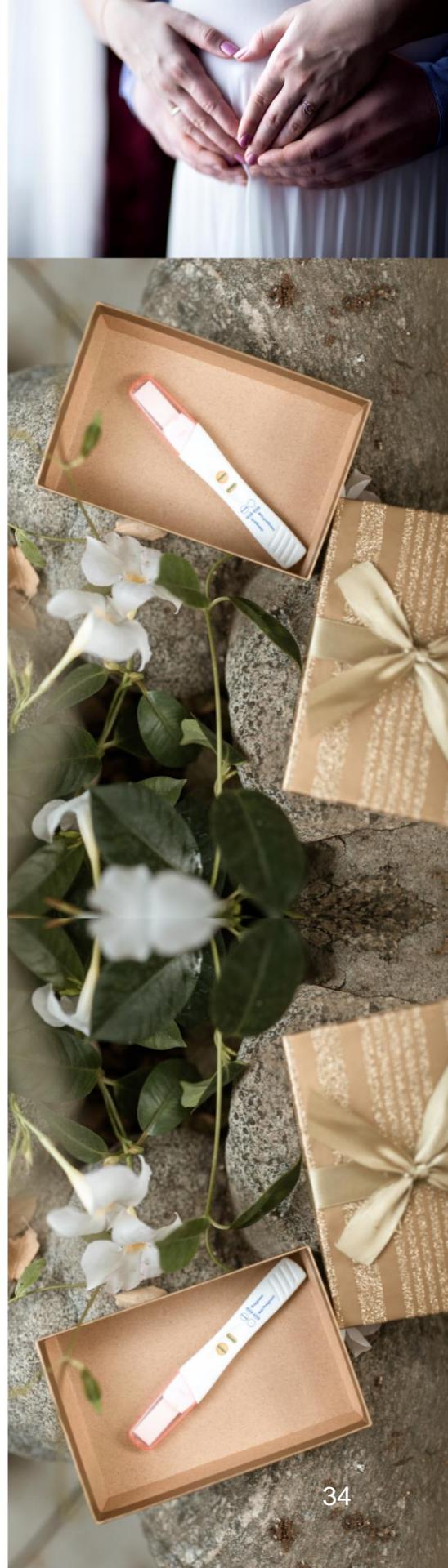
“But whoever of you is ill or on a journey, then let them fast an equal number of days after Ramadan. For those who can only fast with extreme difficulty, compensation can be made by feeding a needy person for every day not fasted. But whoever volunteers to give more, is better for them. And to fast is better for you if only you knew.”

[Glorious Quran, Surah Al Baqarah (The Cow) 2:184]

It is understandable for pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers to feel left out but choosing not to fast keep both the baby and the mother in good health. This is especially important for women with pregnancy complications such as gestational diabetes, whereby fasting can make maintaining blood sugar levels tricky.

The missed fasts can be done later. There are various ways one can still benefit from the month of Ramadan. Let us see how.

1) By praying Tarawih (The Night Prayers) inside one's home, sitting instead of standing.



2) Reading the Quran, and listening to religious podcasts on YouTube.

3) Dhikr grants us satisfaction and contentment.

It is an amazing way to calm the heart and the senses when we are not only troubled, but tired, happy or sad. Pregnancy and breastfeeding can be daunting and dhikr can be a solution. Allah (The Most High) mentioned:

الَّذِينَ ءامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ طَوبَى لَهُمْ وَخُسْنَ مَآبٍ

"Those who believe and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah, for without doubt, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction."

[Glorious Quran, Surah Ar-Ra'd (The Thunder) 13:28]

4) Focus on prayer and reflection.

5) Prioritize spiritual growth.

Pregnant and breastfeeding women can use this time to deepen their knowledge of Deen, work on personal development, and strengthen their relationship with Allah. Growing a fetus inside the womb and finally delivering the baby are all signs of Allah's Greatness. Using this miracle to strengthen one's relationship with Allah in Ramadan can be life-changing.

6) Engage in acts of charity.

Various organizations usually launch charitable projects during Ramadan such as donating food packs to the needy, providing iftar packs, and giving zakat. Pregnant and breastfeeding women can be part of these gestures, by contributing financially or physically if one can.



7) Connect with the community.

Pregnancy and the breastfeeding phase can be lonely. Thus, using Ramadan as an opportunity to connect with the community is a good idea. Attend community events such as iftar gatherings in masjids on the ladies' wing, or engage in meaningful conversations with fellow community members to build connections during this blessed month.

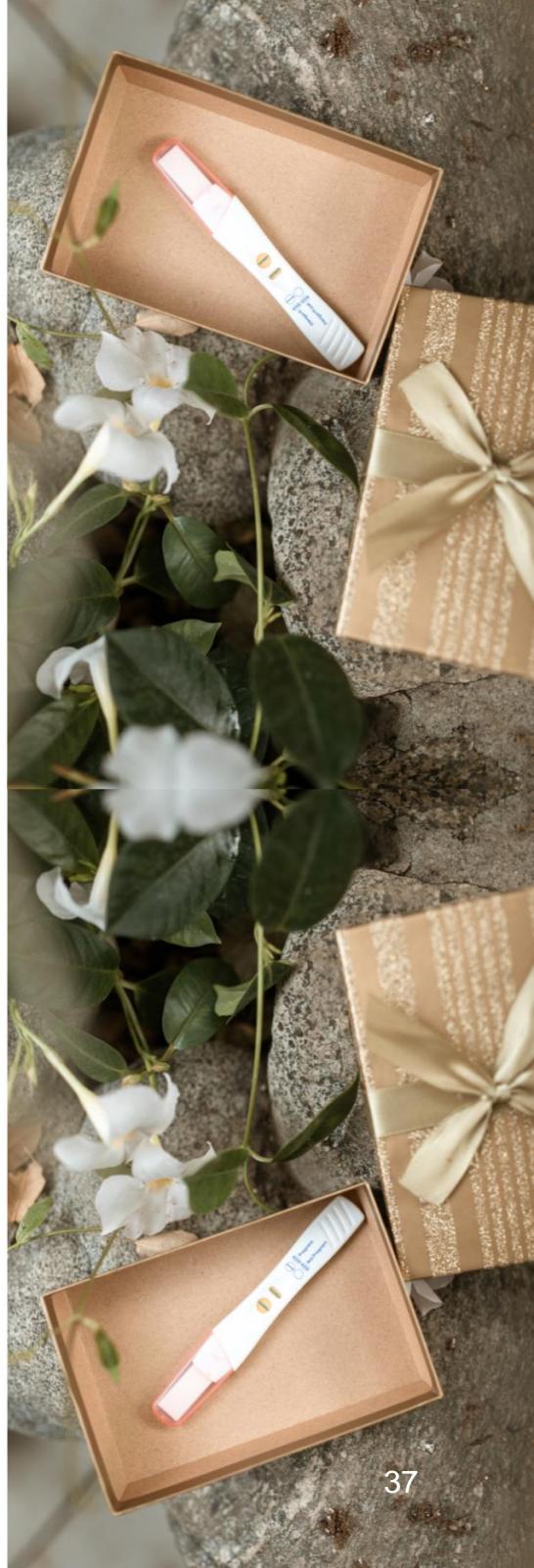
In light of the above, there are multiple ways for pregnant and breastfeeding women to participate in Ramadan that still allow them to reap rewards and strengthen their Imaan. The period of pregnancy and breastfeeding is already a special and rewarding phase, hence, catering and upbringing of a baby should not be frowned upon; instead, it is a great accomplishment and a Sadaqah Jariyah deed.



وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَلْدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلْتُهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعْتُهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمْلًا
وَفَصَلَةٌ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً قَالَ رَبُّ
أَوْزَعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرْ نِعْمَتَكَ اللَّهِ أَعْمَتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَلَدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَلَحًا
تَرَضَنِهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي دُرْرِيَّتِي إِلَيْ تَبَّتْ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَيْ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

“We have enjoined man to be kind to his parents. In pain did his mother bear him and in pain did she give birth to him. The carrying of the child to his weaning is thirty months. And when he is grown to full maturity and reaches the age of forty, he prays: “My Lord, dispose me that I may give thanks for the bounty that You have bestowed upon me and my parents, and dispose me that I may do righteous deeds that would please You, and also make my descendants righteous. I repent to You, and I am one of those who surrender themselves to You.”

[Glorious Quran, Surah Al-Ahqaf (The Wind-Curved Sandhills) 46:15]





A spiritual journaling during Ramadan

Asqarini Hasbi, B.Sc. Founder Writing for Happiness. Earned her bachelor's degree in Mathematics at Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia/State University of Jakarta, Indonesia. She has written a short story compilation " The Smiling Old Lady and The Rose Garden (English)" a poetry collection book 'The Crescent Heart (English), "Kepingan Kehidupan" and "Majelis Rindu". Plenty of her articles were published in many magazines such as Info KBN, BUMN Track and other media.

At present, she is working as an employee in a State-Owned Enterprise in North Jakarta. In her free time, she is also a freelancer at The Farah Saeed Online Magazine in the United Kingdom and at online magazine- Kanvas Kids Magazine, in Ireland.



1. Find Your Why.

Ever read a book “*Start With Why*” by Simon Sinek? By focusing on something that people can relate to with your core value, you can set yourself up for a deep kind of success. Sinek mentioned that we have adequate energy to initiate, move forward and finish something, “*If you know the reason why*”. Of course, if we talk about Ramadan we wish that every day we can do fasting in the most proper ways. Sinek argues that by starting with the “why” - the deeper sense of purpose and belief that motivates and inspires - individuals and organizations can create a clear direction, build trust, and cultivate loyalty. So, you need to know the main reason why you want to do spiritual journaling.

For most Muslims around the world, the holy month of Ramadan surely becomes one of the most awaited months in the lunar calendar. So many things to be wished and hoped for, and as a result, all we wish for from Ramadan is getting Allah’s mercy for us.

However, the real point of what Allah asked is to become a better human (in Taqwa). For that, to have such spirit, we need to find the right way to do it. My experiences involved doing some spiritual journaling during the month of Ramadan, which helped me to have a positive impact on my life, here are several steps on how to do it:





2. Focus on The Positive.

In life, there are some good and bad days. When doing spiritual journaling, it is important to take a lesson or wisdom (hikmah) in your life. Why is it very important to focus on the positive? We have limited time and energy. Any negative elements will hurt our mind, body and also environment (it affects our family, friends, colleagues, etc). So try to seek the silver lining in any bad situation you face.

3. Start Simple.

For a beginner, writing a journal can be daunting and scary at the same time. It can be a burden but you can start with daily things that you are grateful for in life and start with the words *“Alhamdulilah/ Praise to God, Thanks to God, or I am grateful today because of”*.

Using these keywords will help to boost your mood in continuing your writing to be done.





4. Point out Three Things.

Focus on the three priorities which will help you to stay focused. The three most important things you have for that day are what you have done. The feeling of fulfilment will have a positive impact on your emotional development.

5. Spiritual Journey.

If you want something deep in connection with the month of the Quran, Ramadan is the perfect way to start your day with Quranic Journaling, where you can pick a verse/ chapter by its theme and look for the translation. Within this, it is better to find a tutor/ustadh/ustadhah to help and guide you so that you will not misinterpret the meaning. You can also join a Quranic journaling community to get support and have some motivation to accomplish the program in 30 days/ during Ramadan.





6. Evaluate.

When you are done.

Try to evaluate the process.

In this stage, it will help you to grasp or track your progress and how you did well along the way. By making an evaluation you can fix it and also make sure that you are doing the things you need to improve and make notes for the next activities in the future.



30 DAY Ramadan Journal Reflection

What do you hope to achieve today and why?

List how you will achieve your goals

Did you pray today?

FAJR

DHUHR

ASR

MAGHRIB

ISHA

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Evening Reflection

Did you complete your goals?

If yes, pray two units of prayer giving thanks. If not, do not be disheartened, give a reason why.



Think of ONE way in which you can improve for tomorrow.

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Finishing Surah	
Finishing verse	

Evening Reflection

Did you complete your goals?

If yes, pray two units of prayer giving thanks. If not, do not be disheartened, give a reason why.



Think of ONE way in which you can improve for tomorrow.

30 DAY Ramadan Journal Reflection

What do you hope to achieve today and why?

List how you will achieve your goals

Did you pray today?

FAJR

DHUHR

ASR

MAGHRIB

ISHA

30 DAY Ramadan Journal Reflection

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Iraqi Lentil soup recipe

The botanical name for Lentils is *Lens culinaris* which is enriched with essential amino acids and has the third most protein content than other legumes after hemp and soybeans (Farooqi, 2012). Its nutritional status serves a great use as a soup dish known as Shorbeh or Marjimeg during the blessed month of Ramadan. It can grow about 15 inches tall and its seeds grow in pods. This explains why it has been widely planted since the Biblical times in Ancient Egypt and the Middle East (Farooqi, 2012).

It has been referenced in Surah Baqarah (The Cow) verse 61.

'And [recall] when you said, "O Moses, we can never endure one [kind of] food. So call upon your Lord to bring forth for us from the earth its green herbs and its cucumbers and its garlic and its lentils and its onions.'

Of respect for my dear friend and her lovely family, I wanted to dedicate this recipe that was adapted from Nadia's Healthy Kitchen (2024) and Ibrahim (2021). It is suitable for all diets including vegan and gluten-free

Ingredients

- Olive oil.
- 1 red or white Onion
- Three cups of Red split lentils
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Tablespoon Cumin
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Tablespoon Salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Tablespoon Curry powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Tablespoon Chilli
- Vegetable stock
- Water
- 1 Lemon
- Coriander
- Stainless Steel Food Strainer
- Hand Blender
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Tablespoon of Curcumin

Method

1. The lentils do not require soaking the night before and just gently rinse the lentils with cold water and strain before use.
2. Heat the oil in a large pan.
3. Chop the onions in small squares and sauté the onions with the olive oil for 5 minutes until golden brown.
4. Please add the washed lentils to the onions and fry on medium heat.
5. Once fried, add sufficient amount of warm water to the pot where the lentils become submerged. The water content should be two inches away from the rim of the pot.
6. Please add the spices and vegetable stock.
7. Once boiled, please lower the heat pressure and continue to cook for 20 minutes and stir periodically until the lentils turn yellow and have a soft texture.
8. Please remove from the heat and once cooled transfer to a blender until a creamy appearance is apparent.
9. Please squeeze the lemon juice into half the lemon.
10. Please serve with chopped fresh coriander.

References

Farooqi, M.I.H, (2012) *Medicinal Plants in the Traditions of Prophet Muhammad* Lucknow: Sidrah Publishers

Ibrahim, D. (2021) *Easy Iraqi Lentil Soup Recipe (Marjimeg or Shorbeh) I Nana's kitchen.* Available at: <https://hyatco.com/blogs/nanas-kitchen-recipes/easy-iraqi-lentil-soup-recipe-marjimeg-or-shorbeh-nanas-kitchen> [Accessed: 24th February 2024]

Nadia's Healthy Kitchen (2024) *Iraqi Lentil Soup (Vegan)* Available at: <https://nadiashealthykitchen.com/iraqi-lentil-soup-vegan/> [Accessed: 24th February 2024]

Iraqi Kebab recipe

In every cultural context, the preparation of the kebab is uniquely addressed through its herbs, spices and method. Here, we will be sharing a recipe from About Her (2022) on how to make this delicious kebab recipe.

Ingredients

Poultry and Vegetables

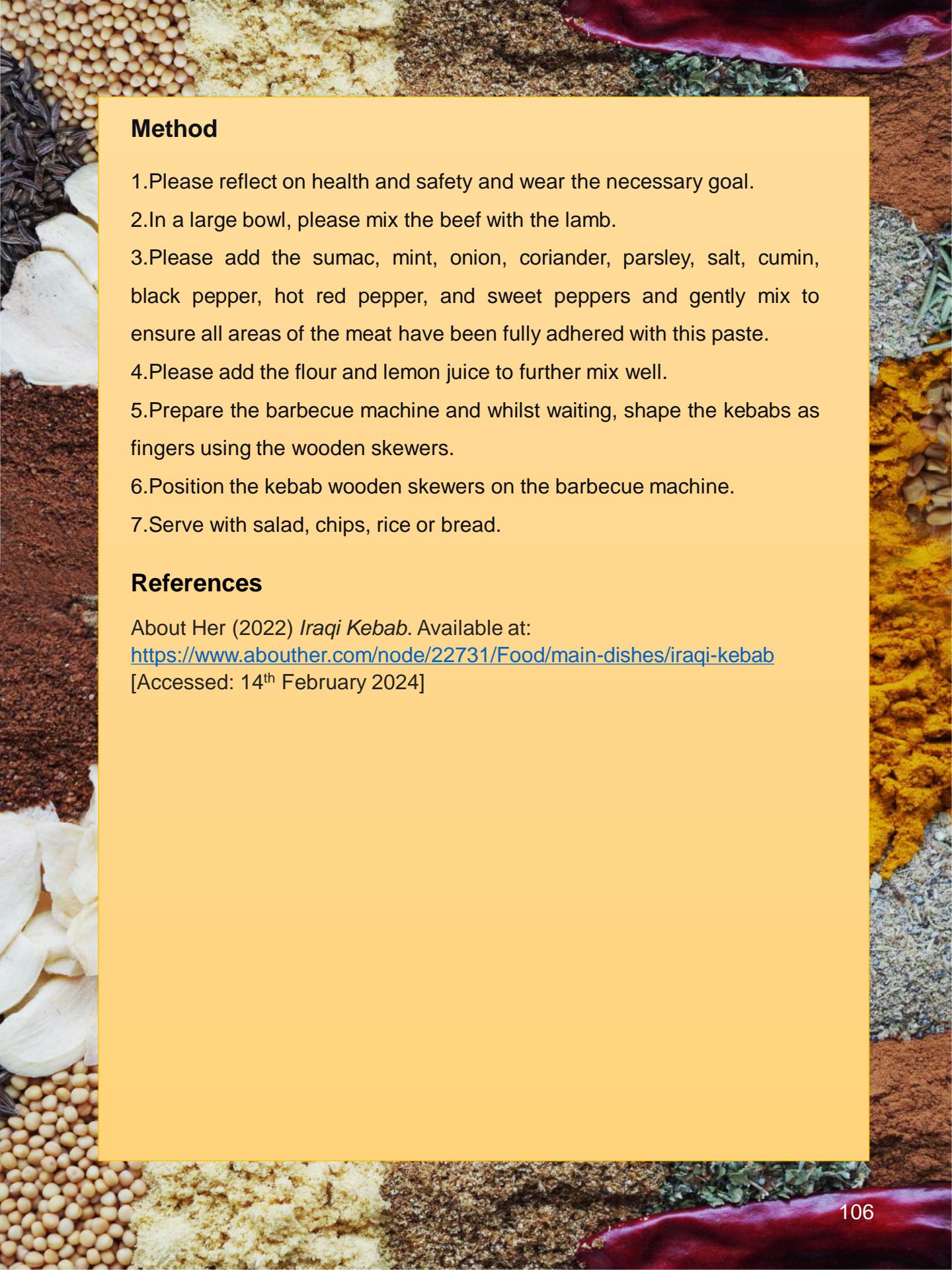
- Olive oil.
- 1 red or white Onion
- Three cups of Red split lentils
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Tablespoon Cumin
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Tablespoon Salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Tablespoon Curry powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Tablespoon Chilli

Herbs and Spices

- Vegetable stock
- Water
- 1 Lemon
- Coriander
- Stainless Steel Food Strainer
- Hand Blender
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Tablespoon of Curcumin

Equipment

- Mixing bowls
- Barbecue Coal
- Utensils (Cutlery)
- Apron
- Gloves
- Wooden skewers



Method

1. Please reflect on health and safety and wear the necessary gear.
2. In a large bowl, please mix the beef with the lamb.
3. Please add the sumac, mint, onion, coriander, parsley, salt, cumin, black pepper, hot red pepper, and sweet peppers and gently mix to ensure all areas of the meat have been fully adhered with this paste.
4. Please add the flour and lemon juice to further mix well.
5. Prepare the barbecue machine and whilst waiting, shape the kebabs as fingers using the wooden skewers.
6. Position the kebab wooden skewers on the barbecue machine.
7. Serve with salad, chips, rice or bread.

References

About Her (2022) *Iraqi Kebab*. Available at:
<https://www.abouther.com/node/22731/Food/main-dishes/iraqi-kebab>
[Accessed: 14th February 2024]

Ramadan Quiz

1. **Which month was the Quran first revealed?**

- A. Rabbi-Al-Awal (6th month of the Hijri calendar)
- B. Ramadan (12th month of the Hijri calendar)
- C. Ramadan (9th month of the Hijri calendar)

2. **Ramadan initiates and finishes depending on which sighting?**

- A. Moon
- B. Stars
- C. Sunrise

3. **What is Laylatul Qadr?**

- A. The time Muslims break their fast.
- B. The night when the Quran was first revealed.
- C. The festival that ends Ramadan.

4. **What is the name of the month after Ramadan?**

- A. Eid ul Fitr
- B. Shaban
- C. Shawwal



Ramadan Quiz

5. What is the name of the month in which fasting is prohibited?

- A. Dhul-Hijjah
- B. Dhul-Qaidah
- C. Safar

6. What are the first 10 days of Ramadan?

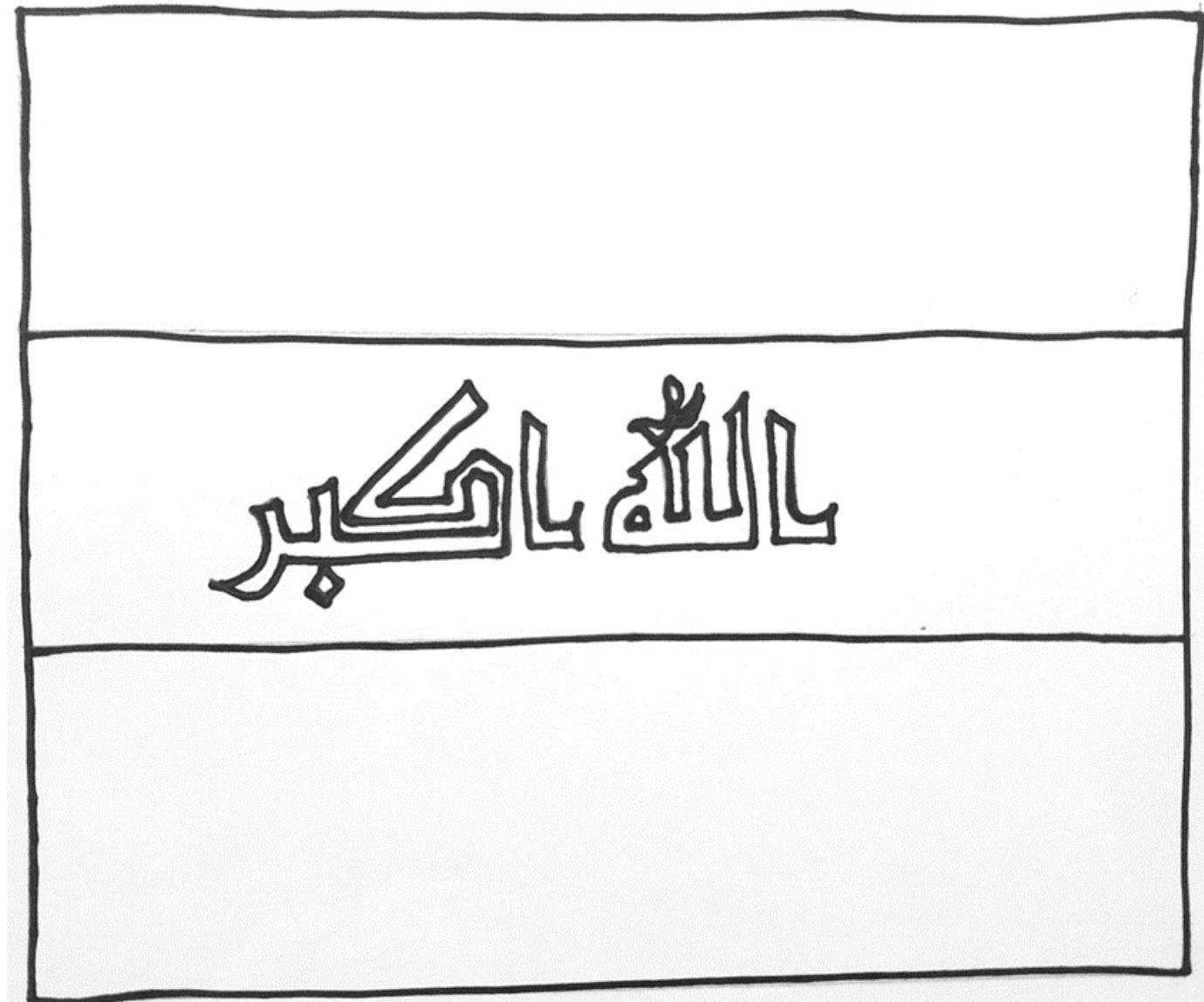
- A. The Days of Mercy
- B. The Days of Forgiveness
- C. The Days of Protection from the Hell-fire

7. To whom was the Quran revealed?

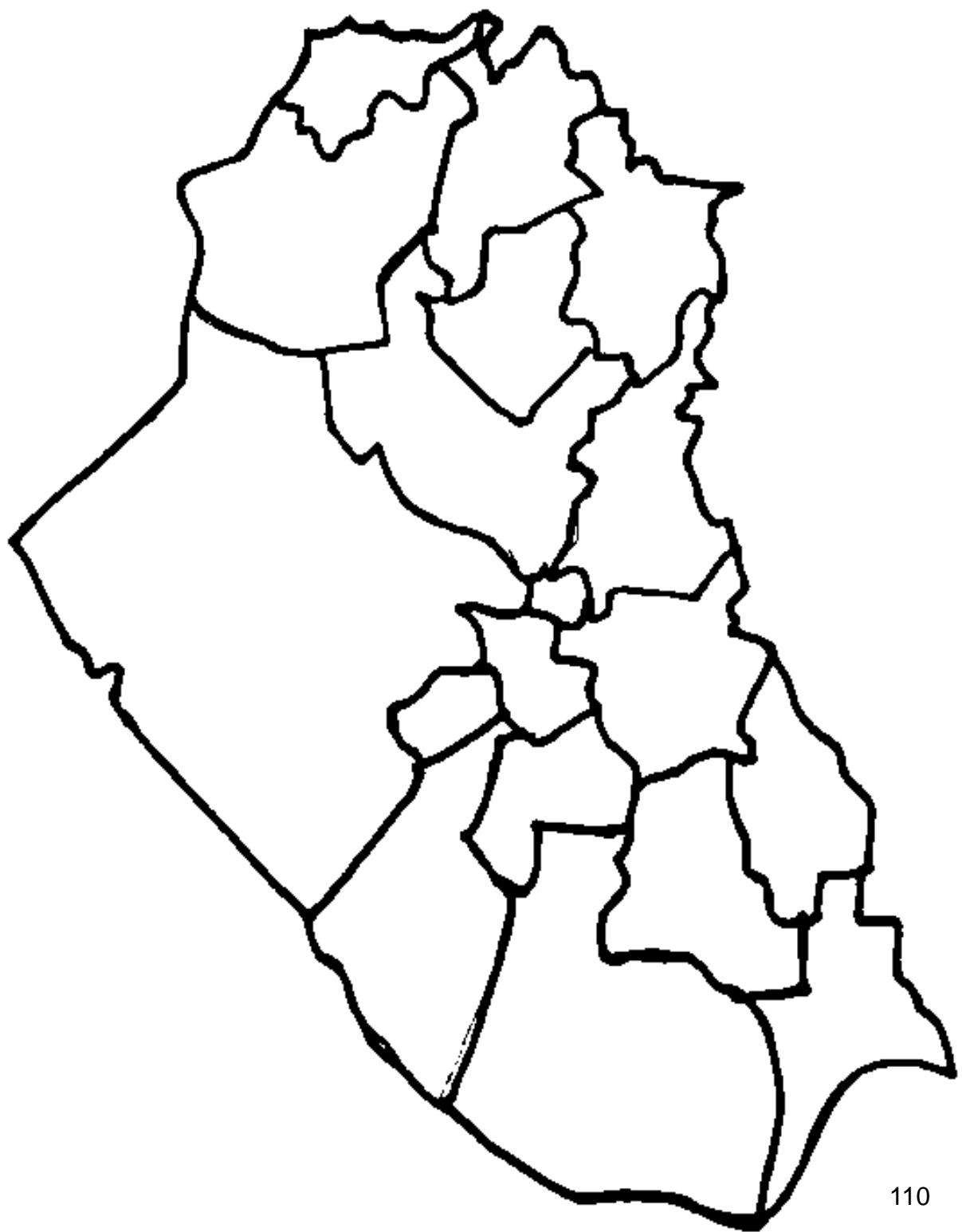
- A. Angel Gabriel (peace be upon him)
- B. Angel Malik
- C. Allah directly during Israa and Miraaj



The Flag of Iraq



The Map of Iraq





الله

