

Ramadan...with baby!



(Tips on making a mother's fast last)

Allaah The Most High Says what means: "*To Allaah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth; He creates what He wills. He gives to whom He wills female [children], and He gives to whom He wills males..*" [Quran 42:49]

A mother lode of Ramadan blessings:

Children are God's gifts to whomever He so pleases. As such, they should not become obstacles to our thankful efforts in Ramadan to increase our worship of a Most Gracious and Generous Lord.

Ramadan is back again, Al-Hamdulillaah—and not a moment too soon! We should be grateful we are granted another precious chance to fast, increase our acts of worship, and pile up as many good deeds as possible in just a month's time. It is often over in a blink of an eye. So it's a race to make the most of each day and night in devotion to, and sincere worship of Allaah, our Lord and Creator.

But for a worshipper who's also a wife, this goal can be an oh so difficult one to achieve—balancing a Ramadan schedule for the soul against taking care of a home and a family in a fasting and night intensive time. This is exponentially truer for mothers who are breastfeeding and caring for a baby while fasting and running a fasting household.

How often a new mother is up all night with her baby tending to its needs and settling it to sleep! She barely closes her eyes before it's the wee hours of the night and its time to get up and start the fasting day. The loss of sleep, weakness from fasting, and the substantial calorie and time losses of nursing a hungry baby can leave a worshipping mother exhausted, even depressed.

These are the last feelings of spirit a Muslim seeks to mine, especially during the auspicious month of Quran. When that Muslimah is also a mother, she struggles both to fulfill her family's needs and that of the home, in addition to her own Ramadan worship. There can be no doubt that fasting, Prayer, and recitation of Quran own a higher priority

over her, even as Allaah Almighty reminds us in the Noble Quran: "***O you who have believed, let not your wealth and your children divert you from remembrance of Allaah. And whoever does that – then those are the losers..***" [Quran 63:9] Yet a Muslim mother's household and care-giving worship do not desist.

Yet while maintaining the fast and sustaining increased acts of worship in Ramadan presents such women with particularly arduous challenges, it nonetheless remains true that she can excel on the *Siyaam* (fasting) and *Qiyaam* (night Prayer) side and in the administration and nurture of home and baby too. Indeed, it is not only absolutely possible, but utterly spiritually invigorating. With substantial organization and pre-planning, motivated new mothers (and new mothers again) can reap all the rewards of Ramadan and then some, and enjoy this special month too.

Down-home Ramadan advice

Sister Alayah, a stay-at-home mother of four in Georgia, has this counsel for Ramadan mothers: Do as much preparation as possible well before Ramadan even begins. "I have fasted during pregnancy, while breastfeeding, and [while] coping with colicky babies. You name it and I went through it." What worked best for Sister Alayah was making a balanced Ramadan schedule and sticking to it. "I just made sure that everything had its time and place. I planned the Ramadan *Suhoor* and *Iftaar* meals beforehand. I created the daily menus and went shopping."

For older children, Alayah recommends having crafts and simple toys on hand to keep them occupied so that you can perform prayer, read the Quran, or work in the kitchen. "I make Ramadan folders for my children. They have their own schedule for fun activities during the Ramadan day, as well as Quran and Hadeeth study pages. I also print coloring and craft pages from the Internet, which is an excellent resource."

As for caring for a baby, Alayah says: "I always make sure that my baby is well fed and cared for first before I tend to other activities." By doing this, the baby is less likely to be fussy when the mother wants to perform prayer or read the Quran. With a clean diaper and a full belly, the baby will most likely be content while the mother engages in acts of worship or other activities.

Mothers can also rely a bit on technology when trying to free her hands up for worship or housework.

Automated baby swings and rockers are hot items for infants, though they can cost. They may soothe your baby, but they won't protect them. Be sure you are in the same room supervising to ensure the safety of your baby.

Samurai strategies for a sweet Ramadan

Aasiya, another stay-at-home mom who lives in Japan, remembers being all alone during Ramadan with her then 1-month-old baby Safa. "I was recovering from a C-section and could not do much around the house. I relied on an 'old wives' technique to

make my baby sleep longer during the Ramadan nights." Aasiya bathed her daughter every night before bed then swaddled her firmly in a blanket. "She would sleep tight through the night. I would be able to recite Quran and [make] *Thikr* or warm up my heart in prayer without interruption."

Aasiya also made it a habit of getting up an hour before the *Suhoor* meal so that she could perform the *Tahajjud* Salaah night vigil and prepare things for the next day while her baby snoozed. Simple things like quickly chopping vegetables or defrosting meat can be done right before *Suhoor* so that they will be ready when you need them later in the day.

What helped Aasiya most during Ramadan was keeping the *Iftaar* menu simple. "I stuck with preparing one appetizer, one main course and fruit salad every day during Ramadan." She also kept the cleaning of her home to a bare minimum. "Being a cleaning freak, I had to make myself understand one thing in Ramadan: I am supposed to perform my prayer and Quran recitation properly. Nobody is going to award me medals for keeping the house super clean. All energy I have would be my baby's requirement when she was awake in the daytime, so I should be loyal to Allaah and my daughter in Ramadan."

For breastfeeding mothers who want to fast but fear their milk supply will diminish or they will feel extra thirsty, Aasiya shares some advice that helped her during Ramadan with her baby. "I always ate yogurt during the *Suhoor* meal, as someone told me it helps prevent thirst. It worked like a charm for me. I also drank a lot of fluids, mostly water, during *Suhoor* and after *Iftar*." As a result, sister Aasiya had no trouble fasting in Ramadan and rarely felt thirsty, even though she maintained her regular breastfeeding schedule to keep up with the demands of her baby.

...If only you knew

It's important to note that pregnant and breastfeeding mothers are not required to fast during Ramadan and can make up the missed days at a later date. But the incentives, the incentives...

Allaah, Transcendent and Exalted, Says in the Gracious Quran what means: "***[Fasting for] a limited number of days. So whoever among you is ill or on a journey [during them] – then an equal number of days [are to be made up]. And upon those who are able [to fast, but with hardship] – a ransom [as substitute] of feeding a poor person [each day]. And whoever volunteers excess – it is better for him. But to fast is best for you, if you only knew.***" [Quran 2:184]

Thus many Muslim women opt to fast during Ramadan and it is permissible for them to do so, in accordance with the approval of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Remember! All the missed fasts from Ramadan must be made up at a later date. Say, 29 or 30 days of fasting, sometimes running into multiple years of childbearing and nursing, can be hard to make up on your own.

Moreover, not fasting in Ramadan truly makes the heart heavy and sad. "When you are determined to fast in Ramadan so that you do not have to make up the fasts later all alone, you show courage," observes Aasiya. "Ask Allaah for help. It is His blessing that will energize you during the fast. You will feel successful after a whole month of Ramadan worship while juggling the care of your baby and the house-work."

Ramadan is like a rainbow that appears in the sky after a cloudburst on a sun-drenched day. Its beauty and mercy last only as long as the time it is permitted by Allaah. Muslims must seize the Ramadan days and nights in utter worship of Allaah while striving to keep distractions at bay.

"Ramadan is a beautiful month, so have patience," says Sister Alayah. "Get the whole family involved in worship and lending a hand to the mother of the home so that she, too, can worship."

Incidentally, Sister Alayah has taken her Ramadan scheduling to the ultimate level by implementing it for the entire year, not fasting daily, of course. "Everything I have shared is now the basic routine for my family, not just during Ramadan. So, when Ramadan comes again it is not hard for my family to adjust."

(courtesy to: www.islamweb.net)