



MAS
Youth
Ministry

JULY 2021

REVIVE

INVEST IN YOUR AKHIRA



DHUL HIJJAH - THE 10 BEST DAYS OF THE YEAR

HOW TO USE THIS PACKET

Asalaamu alaikom! Each program packet is a resource that you can adapt to best serve your youth and community. Please feel free to use supplemental materials, ideas, or mix & match activities in a way that maintains building on the topic. We'd love to hear how your chapter modifies and implements this program or the activities included!

This packet offers time for fellowship, opportunities to reflect and connect with the origins and rites of Hajj, and a focus on renewing our intention and worship - incorporating the **10 Tips to Make the Most of the 10 Best Days of the Year.**

This may be used all together as-is in a single program, like a Qiyam, or as a weekly program focused on different aspects of Dhul Hijjah throughout the month. If you decide to implement a weekly program, please note that the long program is divided into sections with specific focuses and learning goals - this can be a good way to divide the program up.

Alternatively, if your center is not ready to implement a full Qiyam or weekly program for Dhul Hijjah you can utilize these activities after Eid (as an extension of the lessons and practices of Dhul Hijjah in our daily lives) or any time during the year!

You will find a general, at-a-glance Qiyam outline followed by the detailed outline including notes for facilitation and preparation, followed by an Addendum including all of the references resources (printables, connection message, supplemental teaching tools).

When it comes to planning *your event* please note that a break is included in each section of the outline so that there is enough overall buffer time included in the plan to accommodate your local needs and preferences re: prayers, meals, drop-off/pick-up, etc. All of the breaks and timings truly depend on your center's preferences and what makes sense in the whole of the program.

Please reach out if you have any questions or need any support -

JazakumAllah khairan for your service!

To implement the stand-alone or weekly programs, simply choose from the different segments and activities detailed in the Qiyam outline below, figure out the program flow that works best for your group, and modify the timing to fit your group's needs.

Example of a two hour program outline - (remember, do what works best for your group and the effectiveness of the program!)

2 Hour Program

- Welcome (5 min)
- Icebreaker & Ta'aruf (20 min)
- Khatira/Intro to Topic (15 min)
- Small Group Breakout (20 min)
- Break: Fellowship & Food (25 min)
- Lesson Connection Activity (30 min)
- Closing and Announcements (5 min)

If your capacity is low at the moment and you don't feel ready for a Qiyam or weekly program but you don't want to miss this opportunity to engage your youth during Dhul Hijjah, we suggest doing a simple program (examples as follows).

If you would be ready for a Qiyam or series after Eid, take this opportunity to start engaging your volunteers/facilitators/leads, start planning, and announce the upcoming programs at your gathering!

- **Halaqa & Fellowship Circle:** *(before or at the beginning of Dhul Hijjah)*
 - Learning, conversation, reflection on Dhul Hijjah's significance and social bonding
- **Spiritual Gathering:** *(night before Day of Arafat to inspire fasting the next day or after Dhuhr and before Maghrib on the Day of Arafat connecting to Wuquf al-Arafat)*
 - Khatira, Quran reflection, Ma'thurat, communal prayer
- **Group Iftar:** *(on the Day of Arafat as a stand alone gathering or right after praying Maghrib together right after the spiritual gathering described above)*
 - Beforehand try to rally your youth to make the intention to fast on the Day of Arafat - you can even establish fasting or prayer inspiration and support partners (just for this or for the rest of the summer!) - and gather together in fellowship and worship with one another at a community or youth iftar.

QIYAM: GENERAL OUTLINE

PART 1 - Tawhid and Trust - Our Relationship with Allah (1.5 hours)

Welcome and Sign-In (5 min)

Intro Taaruf Questions (10-20 min)

Icebreaker Activity - "What Happens Next?" (20 min)

Reflection + Connection Session on Trust from previous 'games' (30 min)

Break (10-15 min)

PART 2 - The Experience and Significance of Hajj (1.5 hours)

Video "My Hajj Experience" (5-10 min) - *understand the sites/spirit*

Hajj Step by Step Worksheet - page 9, 10 (20 min) - *understand the steps/how*

Find & Match Challenge - page 11, 12 (30 min) - *understand the why/significance*

Connecting Message - page 13, 14 (10 minutes) - *infuse your worship with meaning!*

Break (20 min)

Transitioning everyone into the next phase of the program which is more worship focused and includes the ways we are able to make the most of these best 10 days!

PART 3 - Making the Best of the Best 10 Days (1.5 hours)

"10 Tips to Make the Most of the Best 10 Days" - page 15, 16 (30 min)

Heart to Heart Activity - page 17-19 (20 min)

Group Dhikr or Duaa - (10 min)

Intention Stations (30 min)

- Community Service Opportunities
- Masjid Specific Opportunities
- Vision Board Making/Goal Setting

PART 4 - Preparing Ourselves for Action and Service (1.5 hours)

Fellowship Focus - (30 min)

Spiritual Power Hour - (1 hour)

- Individual Worship Renewal
- Communal Prayer + Takeaway Reflections + Mu'tharat

*Taaruf, Fellowship, and Personal Reflection***Welcome (5 min)****Intro Taaruf Questions (10-20 min)**

Write the questions so everyone can see them. Use a plush ball or something similar person throwing chooses the question for the person who is catching and it keeps going until everyone has answered once!

- *What is something or someone you really love and just can't live without?*
- *What is one of your strongest skills or talents in your opinion?*
- *How do you feel when your report card or grades are being sent to your parents and why?*

Icebreaker Activity - "What Happens Next?" Game (25 min)

This activity is more fun with videos so if you have the capability to play on a screen with sound, that is the best option. If so, a "What Happens Next?" YouTube video is linked here for your use.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWssn2ONZFo>

If searching for similar already compiled videos: "What happens next quiz or game" yields results - you just have to watch them to ensure they are masjid and youth friendly, of course. You can also choose about 5 clips from different videos of your choice where it will be hard to guess what happens next because it is something unexpected (and preferably funny!).

The video linked above has a 3 second countdown between each play so be near the pause button to give your participants ample time to guess (and laugh!). Encourage the group to guess what will happen next. Once enough participants have guessed, hit the play button again so the group can see if they're right or not!

Reflection + Connection Session (30 min)

- *How many of you are good at predicting the future or what comes next for yourself?*
- *How many of you have thought that you knew what was going to happen and then were shocked when things turned out totally different? Share stories...*
- *Have you ever been surprised at how sometimes what happens is way better than what you would have thought? What was it?*
- *Have you ever had something happen that was way worse? What was it? Did anything good come out of it? (learned something? stronger person? etc.)*
- *Does anyone have a story you'd like to share about how you trusted God at a time in your life and what happened as a result?*

We are asked to trust Allah completely; Our lives are in His hands but we forget that and oftentimes we want to 'drive the car' of our own lives. Sometimes, something good comes out of something bad and we must trust Allah's plan. We might become better, stronger, or more faithful people. Sometimes we don't see the good right away, or maybe even ever, but we have to trust that Allah is Good and He knows what's best for us. It's hard for us to realize that sometimes, but that is where our faith will sustain us

Break (10 min)

*Team-Building, Critical Thinking, Quran & Hadith***Video "My Hajj Experience" (5-10min)**

A three minute visually inspiring video with clear footage of the places in Hajj - will help participants remember places and names.

Play the video once before participants start working on their worksheets so the spirit of video comes through. Because it is so short, you can play it a second time while the group gets started on filling out their Hajj Step by Step Worksheet!

"My Hajj Experience" by S. Khan: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mXXSH2NHm8>

Hajj Step by Step Fill in the Blank Worksheet (15 min) (p. 9)

Ensure the participants had enough time to complete this activity in a way they actually did it (not copied all the answers!). Can work in pairs as teams or can work alone - facilitator decides based on the dynamic of the group. Depending on your group you will have varying levels of knowledge - some may also know an alternative term if there is more than one for a specific ritual.

***Engage in Conversation** Now that they have seen it on the t.v. screen, in 360 on Youtube, and reviewed the steps of Hajj - how does everyone feel? Excited!? Scared? Has anyone gone on Umrah or visited Makkah - if so what was it like in your words. If not, was it different in the video than you've seen before?*

Find & Match Challenge + Share-out (30 min) (Addendum p. 11 - 12)

Print out pages 11 & 12 - perhaps multiple copies of each depending on how many participants you have in your program! Cut them up on the dotted lines, mix them up, distribute them, and then give your participants time to find "their match".

For example, if you had Sa'i, the term from Hajj on your paper, then you'd look for someone with the story of Hajar running between the two mountains because it matches!

Connecting Message (10 minutes - 20 minutes if more interactive)

A ready to use connecting message with facilitation is on page ---

You can either use the message that we wrote to bring everything together, or delivery your own message with relevant tie-ins and lessons as well.

Break (10-15 min)

*Intention, Focus, and Renewal***10 Tips to Make the Most of the Best 10 Days (30 min) p. 15-16**

- Hand out the 10 Tips printable for everyone to take home - read together taking turns, reflect on the hadiths and verses
- Watch or listen to the related reMAStered podcast if you like - will be sent out to YDs and placed in Google Drive Folder for this program once released.

Intention- Heart to Heart Activity (20 min) p. 17-19

This activity is focused on auditing ourselves and the conditions of our hearts while committing to things that will cleanse our heart for the sake of Allah swt. Before starting this activity it may be good to go over community agreements and respect depending on your group dynamic.

Note: Print enough of both heart outlines for everyone to get a copy of each (always print out some extras just in case!). You will need the print-outs, glue or tape for each person, and pencils.

Detailed facilitation guide and instructions on p. 17

Group Dhikr or Duaa - (10 min)

Upon closing the Heart to Heart activity this is a poignant place to close in group dhikr or duaa led by the facilitator or leader with momentum building. Transition into finding our purpose, making the intention, and planning to make the most of whatever opportunities we have - from Dhul Hijjah onward leading into Intention Stations.

Intention Stations (30 min)

During this time the participants are able to move between stations on a rotation or visit them freely during the half hour with supervision of mentors and facilitators. It is up to you and your team as to how many stations you will have.

This is a wonderful opportunity to make that connection between understanding and action while familiarizing your youth with the programming and service opportunities your center has going on in addition to the organizations in your community.

- **Community Service Opportunities** - opportunities in the community
- **Masjid Specific Opportunities** - how to engage more in the center
- **Goal Setting** - mentors guide participants in goal setting for Dhul Hijjah

Fellowship Focus (30 min)

This time is meant to promote deeper bonds and a stronger support system for all. You can choose to set up games or keep this unstructured fellowship time. Remind participants of community agreements and ground rules and have a mechanism to get them all back in place for the Spiritual Power Hour.

Spiritual Power Hour (1 hour)

- ***Individual Worship Renewal (20 min)***

Facilitate quiet, individual dhikr and reflection before going into congregational prayer. Can be a guided activity or completely silent. This should be done in place all together - not in separate spaces.

- ***Congregational Prayer + Takeaway Reflection + Mu'tharat (40 min)***

Conclude the program in congregational prayer followed by reflections and takeaways from participants who would like to say something and ending with the recitation of the Mu'tharat (recommended to send the pdf linked in the supplemental resources as a link and allow participants to view it on their phone or print out enough copies for every other person to have one).

Closing and Breakfast (TBD based on your group and implementation)

SUPPLEMENTAL MAS RESOURCES

MAS Mu'tharat -

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/18GxvXoQSFQjbFzkK5OmH91wWUCdG1M8/view?usp=sharing>

Faith First: A Guide to Awakening Iman, Magdy Al-Hilali

reMAStered Podcast Episode - *Episode on those 10 Tips Coming soon!*

SUPPLEMENTAL EXTERNAL RESOURCES

An educational tool offering a 360 virtual view of landmarks in Hajj - published in 2015 - voiceover is simple explanations of Hajj landmarks and some of the rituals (no meaning - like it is for non-Muslims to understand the very basics of Hajj- this can be a good video to share with your youth moving the screen around to see the sites as if you are there.

Hajj 360 Interactive Map - <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/hajj360/index.html>

FEEDBACK, REPORTING, AND SUPPORT

Once you implement this program please fill this Google Form out to help us (a) highlight your chapter's activity, (b) have better reporting mechanisms, and (c) gain insight so we can improve upon how we serve and support you!

<https://forms.gle/GTuhjLm5JZQRfz4E9>

If you are not already having regular meetings with us or if you need additional support or would like to discuss this or any other initiative please feel free to schedule a meeting time with our MAS Youth Ministry team:

MK: <https://calendly.com/mkibriya>

Mounira: <https://calendly.com/mounira-madison>

Hajj: Step by Step Worksheet

9th of Dhul Hijjah - 1st Day of Hajj

- Purify yourself, wear the _____
- Offer two rakats prayer and make _____ upon entering the Holy Mosque
- Make your _____ for Hajj and recite _____, preferably at Masjid al-Haram
- Travel to Mina before Dhuhr reciting the Talbiyah frequently (preferably after sunrise if possible as is sunnah)
- Offer your Dhuhr, Asr, Maghrib and Isha prayers at Mina

10th of Dhul Hijjah - 2nd Day of Hajj

- Offer Fajr prayer in Mina (completing a cycle of 5 daily prayers in Mina)
- Recite _____ audibly at least once after every fardh salah from this point onward until Asr on the 13th of Dhul Hijjah/the final day of Hajj in addition to Talbiyah
- Travel to Arafat and spend your time in ibadah (worship)
- Offer Dhuhr and Asr prayers in Arafat at Masjid al-Namirah (the location where the Prophet ﷺ delivered his farewell sermon during Hajj)
- Perform _____ (standing before Allah- making dua and facing the Qibla)
- Proceed to Muzdalifah at sunset - offer Maghrib and Isha prayers there
- Spend time in _____ (remembrance) and _____ (supplication) as this is a very blessed night to glorify Allah
- Offer Fajr salah and wuquf in Muzdalifah
- Travel back to Mina before sunrise

11th of Dhul Hijjah - 3rd Day of Hajj

- Perform Rami at Jamarah al-Aqaba (only the big pillar the first time)
- Perform _____ (animal sacrifice during Hajj)
- Perform Halq / Taqsir (hair shaved completely for males, trimmed at least one inch for females)
- Travel to _____
- Perform Tawaf al-Ziyarah (Tawaf of Visitation after leaving Mina and arriving in Makkah)
- Perform Sa'i (walking 7 times between the hills of Safa and Marwa)
- Go back to Mina

12th and 13th of Dhul Hijjah - 4th and 5th Day of Hajj

- Perform _____ (pelting/throwing 7 stones at each of the three pillars) on the 4th and 5th days of Hajj (the 11th and 12th of Dhul Hijjah)
- Return to your camp and spend the day in dhikr (remembrance) and ibadah (worship) before departing for _____.

14th of Dhul Hijjah - 6th Day of Hajj

- Stop in Wadi al-Muhassab
- _____ (Farewell Tawaf - the last rite performed before departing from Makkah- circling the Kaaba 7 times and performing two rakats of salah at Maqam Ibrahim).

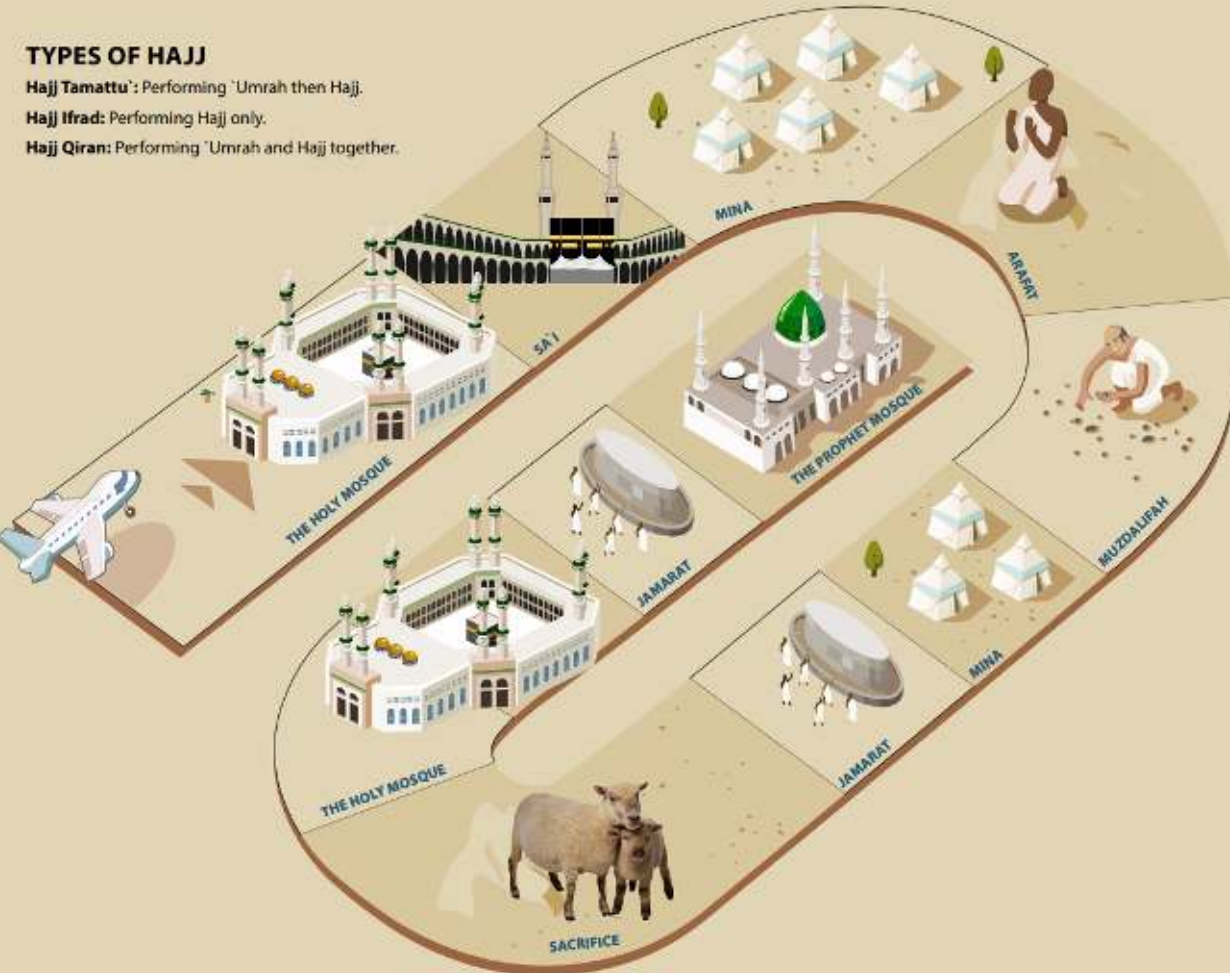
Better Quality via Google Drive (original is a locked PDF)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ud7sLc9jY-H4Sox6ox2OiRVxat0Zhf6v/view?usp=sharing>

A BRIEF GUIDE TO HAJJ

TYPES OF HAJJ

- Hajj Tamattu'**: Performing 'Umrah then Hajj.
- Hajj Iفراد**: Performing Hajj only.
- Hajj Qiran**: Performing 'Umrah and Hajj together.



Rituals of Hajj

1- IHRAM

Make the intention, take a bath, apply perfume, wear the ihram cloth, and offer a two-rak'ah prayer.

2- TALBIYAH

For Hajj Tamattu', one says, "Labbayk Allahumma bi 'Umrah (Here I am, O Allah, for 'Umrah)."
For Hajj Qiran, one says, "Labbayk Allahumma bi Hajj wa 'Umrah (Here I am, O Allah, for Hajj and 'Umrah)."
For Hajj Iفراد, one says, "Labbayk Allahumma Hajjan (Here I am, O Allah, for Hajj)."

3- TAWAF

Upon entering the Holy Mosque, the pilgrim should make tawaf, then pray two rak'ahs.

4- SA'I

In Hajj Tamattu', sa'i must be offered for 'Umrah but in Hajj Iفراد and Qiran, sa'i can be delayed.

Then, the one performing Hajj Tamattu' shaves his head or cuts the hair. By this, the 'Umrah is done, and thus he exits ihram completely.

On the 8th of Dhu'l-Hijjah, the one doing Tamattu' enters ihram for Hajj, recites the talbiyah, and says, "Labbayk Allahumma Hajjan (Here I am, O Allah, for Hajj)."

5- TO MINA

The pilgrim goes to Mina and prays Zhuhr, 'Asr, Maghrib, 'Isha and Fajr there.

6- TO 'ARAFAT

By the sunrise of the 9th day of Dhu'l-Hijjah, the pilgrim moves to 'Arafat spending his time in making dhikr and du'a.

7- TO MUZDALIFAH

When the sun sets, the pilgrim goes to Muzdalifah and stays overnight in it.

8- BACK TO MINA

Before the sun rises, he goes to Mina where he throws Jamarat al-'Aqabah.

9- SACRIFICE

On the 10th day of Dhu'l-Hijjah, the pilgrim slaughters his sacrificial animal, then shaves his head or cuts his hair. Now everything is permissible except having intercourse with one's wife.

10- BACK TO MAKKAH

Then the pilgrim goes back to Makkah and does tawaf and sa'i for Hajj.

After tawaf and sa'i, the pilgrim goes back to Mina and throws the three jamarats during those two days. Then, he exits ihram completely.

11- FAREWELL TAWAF

Upon leaving, one should not move out of Makkah until he has performed the farewell tawaf.

Visiting the Prophet's Mosque

It is highly recommended to visit the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah.

The Talbiyah (Arabic: تلبية)

A devotional prayer uttered by pilgrims during Hajj or Umrah after making the intention to enter into the state of Ihram. It is recited frequently throughout the pilgrimage.

Hajj is the symbol of tawhid (the Oneness of Allah) from the first moment the pilgrim enters ihram. Jabir ibn 'Abdullah said, describing the Hajj of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him): "Then he started to say the words of tawhid, 'Labbayka Allahumma labbayk, labbayka la sharika laka labbayk. Inna al-hamd wal-ni`mata laka wal-mulk, la sharika lak (Here I am, O Allah, here I am. Here I am, You have no partner, here I am. Verily all praise and blessings are Yours, and all sovereignty, You have no partner).'" (Muslim)

This trains the soul to acknowledge the Oneness of Allah and to be sincere towards Him. The pilgrim starts his Hajj with tawhid, and continues to recite the talbiyah with its words of tawhid, and he moves from one action to the next with tawhid.

Takbir al-Tashreeq (Arabic: تكبير التشريق)

A prayer recited by pilgrims after every Fardh Salah during Hajj

When Ibrahim (AS) began moving the knife on his beloved son, Ismaeel (AS), the angels sent by Allah with a ram exclaimed, "Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar (Allah is the greatest, Allah is the greatest)."

Ibrahim (AS) heard the voice of the angels and replied, "La illaah illa Allaahu Wallaahu akbar (there is no god besides Allah, and Allah is the greatest)." His son Ismaeel (AS) heard this conversation and understood that Allah had relieved him from this great trial, thus he replied, "Allaahu Akbar Wa lillaahil hamd (Allah is the greatest, and to Allah belongs all praise)." (Ibid)

Wuquf al-Arafat (Arabic: وقوف; meaning "standing")

The Wuquf at Arafat on the 9th of Dhul Hijjah is an integral rite of Hajj and its non-performance invalidates the entire pilgrimage. During the afternoon, from about noon until sunset, Muslim pilgrims stand in duaa and devotion, praying for God's abundant forgiveness, and listening to Islamic scholars speak on issues of religious and moral importance.

This is on the mountain that Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and his son climbed, where Ibrahim (AS) was about to sacrifice his son at the commandment of Allah (swt). As Ibrahim was preparing to sacrifice his son, Allah (swt) spared him from having to carry out the command at the last moment and he was provided with a sacrificial animal as a substitute (the first Qurbani).

Sa'i (Arabic: السعي)

One of the integral rites of Hajj and Umrah and refers to the ritual of walking back and forth seven times between the two small hills of Safa and Marwa, located adjacent to the Kaaba in Masjid al-Haram.

This rite commemorates the actions of Hajar P, the wife of Ibrahim S who walked between the hills of Safa and Marwa seven times in search for water for her son Ismail S.

Rami al-Jamarat (Arabic: رمي الجمرات)

The act of throwing stones at the Jamarat is known as "Rami". Sometimes referred to as the "Stoning of the Devil"- A rite carried out by Hajj pilgrims whereby small pebbles are thrown at three stone structures.

The ritual of Rami is a symbolic reenactment of the actions of Ibrahim (AS) when he was faced with the trial of having to sacrifice his son. In a dream, Ibrahim was commanded to perform the sacrifice to which he responded with unwavering reliance and trust in the will of Allah. On the way to carry out the commandment, Shaytan repeatedly sought to tempt him into ignoring the command. As Ibrahim reached Jamarah al-Aqaba (i.e. the location where Jamarah al-Aqaba is today), Shaytan attempted to dissuade him. Ibrahim, who was accompanied by Jibril S, was instructed by the archangel to throw seven stones at Shaytan. He obliged and Shaytan fled immediately. Ibrahim then went to Jamarah al-Wusta where Shaytan appeared again. Ibrahim once again threw stones at him and Shaytan fled. He then went to Jamarah al-Ula where Shaytan appeared. Ibrahim threw stones at him once more which led to Shaytan fleeing for the third and final time.

Hady (Arabic: هدي)

The animal sacrifice carried out by pilgrims on the 10th of Dhul Hijjah.

Each time, he (Ibrahim AS) resisted temptation, remaining steadfast in his intention to do as he was commanded. As Ibrahim was preparing to sacrifice his son, he was spared from having to carry out the command at the last moment and was provided with a sacrificial animal as a substitute.

Halq (Arabic: الحلق)

The act of shaving the entire head and **Taqsir (Arabic: التقصير)** The trimming the hair on the head by at least an inch. Performing Halq or Taqsir is the Wajib (obligatory) act that must be performed in order to leave the state of Ihram.

Certainly Allah had shown to His Messenger the vision with truth: you shall most certainly enter the Sacred Mosque, if Allah pleases, in security, (some) having their heads shaved and (others) having their hair cut, you shall not fear, but He knows what you do not know, so He brought about a near victory before that.[Surah al-Fath, 48:27]

Tawaf (Arabic: طواف)

One of the principal rites of the pilgrimage and refers to circumambulating or walking in circles around the Kaaba in an anti-clockwise motion. Seven complete circuits, with each one starting and ending at the Hajar al-Aswad, constitute one Tawaf.

*Abdullah ibn Umar I narrates: The Prophet ﷺ said: '120 mercies descend daily upon the House of Allah, 60 of which are for those who are performing Tawaf, 40 for those who are performing Salah, and 20 for those who gaze at the House of Allah.'*¹

*He also reports: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: 'Whoever circles the Kaaba seven times (Tawaf) and prays two Rak'ahs will have a reward as if he has freed a slave. A man does not raise his foot and bring it back down except that ten good deeds will be written for him, ten bad deeds will be erased, and he will be raised by ten degrees.'*²

He further narrates: Whomsoever makes 50 Tawafs of the Kaaba (ie. fifty by seven rounds), will be free of all his sins, just as the day his mother gave birth to him. '3

Message: Opportunities that are Gifts and Training from Allah SWT

It is a blessing to review and learn the rituals and processes of Hajj with you all. Although we are not on Hajj right now and some of us may have to wait a long time to have the opportunity to make the pilgrimage itself there is wisdom and mercy in whatever Allah has prescribed for us - from the rituals we are asked to perform daily or on Hajj to the timing or fulfillment of Hajj in our lifetimes - and *everything* in between.

Allah is so merciful and wants the best for us that he gives us opportunities and ways to become closer to Him on a daily basis....and *then* He gives us even more special opportunities with greater rewards - like a teacher who doesn't want us to fail giving us extra credit opportunities *and* offering the support and guidance we need to be able to successfully pass our test. The Day of Judgement is our ultimate report card and our test is everything we do and experience in this Dunya. Alhamdulillah for the opportunity of Ramadan and subhanAllah - look at how much Allah wants us to pass our test - He gives us the opportunity of Shawwal after Ramadan and then after that the blessed days of Dhul Hijjah (the best 10 days of the year!) at the end of the Islamic calendar year.

Allah, in His Infinite Mercy, has gifted us Dhul Hijjah, a "blessed gift, a fresh opportunity to erase our sins and cleanse ourselves. It is also a second chance, for those who felt Ramadan slip through their (fingers)."(1

How amazing is that? And it's not that He wants us to pass by ONLY doing the extra credit, only doing the big acts of worship here and there - Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) said, "The most beloved acts of worship are those that are consistent, even if they are small".

These blessed days are gifted to us each year so that we may be renewed in our faith and be inspired to enhance our worship *throughout* the year. If we take advantage of these opportunities, they can provide a boost that help us maintain and grow in our understanding, practice, and application of our faith.

"These special times are periodic boosts that we can use to advance in our quest for seeking strong iman. Look at them more than just multiplied reward; Allah scattered these kernels throughout the year for us so that we may find one to be the catalyst for reviving our faith ... We must be vigilant to not allow these opportunities to slip away from us, and we ask God for His assistance in taking advantage of them." (3, pg. 342)

So our goal in this gathering tonight is to inshaAllah inspire you all to take advantage of blessed gifts such as Dhul Hijjah. We begin by exploring why we observe Dhul Hijjah in the first place **[ask participants why we observe Dhul Hijjah]**. Yes, Dhul Hijjah is important because it is the month of Hajj. **[Ask participants about the origin of Hajj and the rituals performed in Hajj]**

Yes, by reflecting on what we learn from Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and Hajar we understand the significance and symbolism of the series of rituals that make up Hajj better and inshaAllah are inspired by their story to do our best to please Allah and trust in Him completely.

If we want to please Allah and we trust in Him then we will not question what He asks of us or what He commands us to do. This is definitely harder for us all to really do - I know it is for me - than it was for Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and Hajar but Allah already knows that about us.

Alhamdulillah He has given us the gift of learning from these incredible role models - Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and Hajar - and the opportunities - like Dhul Hijjah - to continuously cleanse our hearts so we may grow in our faith and worship to become closer to Allah (swt) and practice the tools that will inshaAllah help us reach a point in our daily lives where we are actively striving to please Allah in everything we do (swt).

Tonight each of our activities highlights a tool found on the 10 Tips to Make the Most of the Best 10 Days of the Year hand-out we have for you to take home so you can remember what we discussed!

1. Set your compass, focus on the destination

Intention is the pillar of worship and the essence and foundation of action. Just as we need to always renew our intentions in our day to day lives, we must be intentional about our goals and the steps we take toward them using iman as our compass and staying focused on the final destination.

2. Keep your good deeds simple and have hope that Allah will multiply your rewards

Allah tells us that any atom's weight of good has a positive effect on our Hereafter. Keep them simple and consistent ... Do what you can do - celebrate every win and trust the Promise of Allah.

"There are no days in which good deeds are more beloved to Allah than in these ten days." The companions asked him, "Not even Jihad for the sake of Allah?" He replied, "Not even Jihad for the sake of Allah—except for a man who goes out with himself and wealth, and returns with neither" (sahih). (1)

3. Keep your prayers or increase your prayers and make sincere duaa - just pray!

First thing we will be asked about, first thing we need to evaluate - whether you pray five times a day or struggle to keep up with daily prayers. Evaluate where you're at and come up with a goal to increase your prayer.

"O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient." (Baqarah 2:153)

4. Remember Allah with dhikr

Keep your heart and mind engaged with His Remembrance between your prayers .. Remember Allah like He's your best friend; like Prophet Ibrahim (AS)

Allah Himself ordered us to increase our remembrance of Him in these days: {And to Remember the name of Allah through the Days appointed.} (al-Haj, 28) This act of worship requires no effort, and can be done any time and any place. All that is required is presence of mind and heart. The Prophet (saw) said, "There are no days greater in the sight of Allah, nor days in which deeds are more beloved to Allah than in these ten days. So fill them with the praises of 'la ilah illa Allah', 'Allah Akbar', and 'alhamdu lillah' (sahih). Dear brother and sister, engage in these blessed remembrances frequently, just as your beloved Prophet asked. (1)

5. Engage with the Words of Allah

How about every night!? Even a few lines! Read and reflect on these most precious days, connect with the Book of Allah however feels most accessible to you right now. You're more likely to connect consistently and "live" the Quran when you connect in a way that works for you (i.e. listening, reciting, tafseer, etc).

Read it with devotion, ponder its meanings, and involve your heart. Listen to this stirring description by Allah: {Allah has revealed the greatest of messages—a Book, consistent within itself, oft-repeated: sending a shiver through the skins of those who fear their Lord; then their skins and their hearts do soften to the remembrance of Allah.} (al Zumar, 23) (1)

6. Reflect upon your habits and refrain from your vices

Evaluate the habits that do not serve you on your journey to the Hereafter. Think of ways you can “fast” from those vices during these 10 days.

Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred through intoxicants and gambling and to avert you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. So will you not desist? (Maidah 5:91)

7. Be charitable - spend of whatever wealth Allah has bestowed upon you for the sake of Allah (swt)

Charity is a key way to live your faith. Charity is a way to have your sins forgiven and to make a new commitment to new habits. Remember charity and giving of your wealth does not always mean money! It can be your time, skills, energy, network, influence, acting with compassion and ihsan, being able-bodied and healthy etc.

Our brothers and sisters who made it to Hajj this year have spent selflessly from their wealth and energy to fulfill their obligation to Allah. Do not hold back your own wealth. Live and give generously for the sake of Allah. Remember, *{You shall not attain righteousness until you give from that which you love!}* (Aal ‘Imran, 92). (1)

"The exponential benefits of charity: it is the best investment, it shields from hellfire, it is a shade on the Day of Judgement, it cures sickness, it wards off trials and difficulty, it brings ease, it brings more sustenance our way, and it extinguishes God's anger." (3, pg 292-295)

8. Spend quality time with family

Take time to bond with your family and strengthen family ties. It's a simple yet profoundly effective form of ibadaah. Safeguarding the relationship with relatives is so encouraged that relatives have been mentioned 23 times in the Holy Quran along with some valuable rulings relating to them.

"And Worship God and join none with Him in worship, and do good to parents, kinsfolk." (4:36)
In this verse, parents and relatives are mentioned right after God mentions himself. Islam views that keeping relations with family members prolongs one's life and increases one's sustenance. *The Holy Prophet said: "He who wishes that his sustenance be increased for him and his death day be delayed, then he should pay attention to his kinsfolk."*

9. Fast on the Day of Arafat

Forgiveness for previous year and forthcoming year? Subhan'Allah! The Prophet (sws) said, *"Fasting the day of Arafah erases the sins of two years: the previous year and the coming one."* The Prophet (saw) said, *"There is no day in which Allah liberates more servants from the hellfire than the Day of Arafah"* (sahih). (1)

10. Invest in your forever - your Akhira and legacy

On the authority of Abu Hurairah (RA) that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, 'When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: Sadaqah Jariyah (a continuous charity), or knowledge from which benefit is gained, or a righteous child who prays for him'. (Muslim)

Heart to Heart Activity Instructions

- Think about what you do that leaves stains on your heart and what you do that cleanses your heart. How do you know? What do you feel when you do certain things? Why do we feel those ways?
- Start by writing all of the things you think are staining your heart in the dark outlined heart (or on back of post-its if there are privacy concerns) in pencil. What are the things that you do - whether small or big - that you know are displeasing to Allah? (these are hard to admit sometimes especially to write down - but its okay - this is only between you and Allah here)
- Think about the good deeds you perform already - the things that would cleanse your heart. Write those down on the top of the white heart outline. Think about how frequently you do them. If your scale was in front of you today - how would it be leaning?
- Look at the 10 Tips and reflect and think of the things you could be doing daily, monthly, yearly to cleanse your heart and balance your scales. What are some of the goals you can realistically commit to this year inshaAllah? Write those goals down on the bottom of your white heart outline.
- Cut the white heart outline out, look at your dark heart outline and think about the things you wrote and didn't write
- Take a moment to thank Allah for his mercy and steadfast love and tape or glue the white heart outline in place over the other heart so your sins are veiled (as they are by Allah) and to symbolize the cleansing of our hearts we hope to attain. With this action we are committing to striving to achieve the goals we wrote on the white heart.

Verily, when the slave (of Allah) commits a sin, a black spot appears on his heart. When he refrains from it, seeks forgiveness and repents, his heart is polished clean. But if he returns, it increases until it covers his entire heart. And that is the 'Ran' which Allah mentioned: {No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts of that which they were earning.} (Quran 83:14)" (Ibn Majah)

Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves. (Quran 2: 222)

