

# **ISLAM AND WATER**

*The Haǧǧar (r.a.) Story and Guide*





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## Introduction

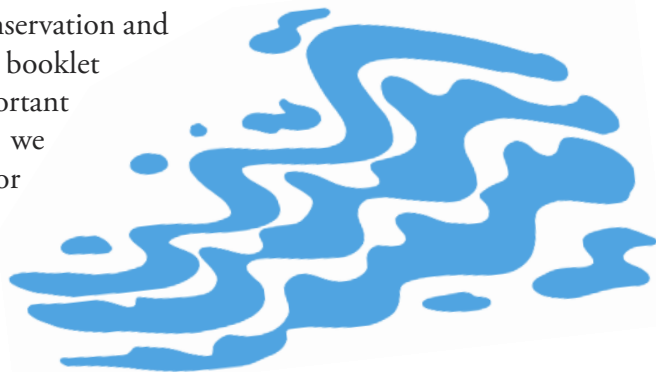
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*Bismillah ir Rahman ir Raheem  
In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

All praise is due to Allah (SWT) the Creator and Lord of the Worlds. Peace and blessings be upon all the Prophets of Allah, His Last Messenger, Muhammad (SAW), his family and companions.

“Have not those who disbelieve known that the heavens and the earth were joined together as one united piece, then We parted them? And We have made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?” [Qur’an 21:30]

Water is just such a crucial part of our existence and yet we take it for granted. With the impact of climate change on the earth, we are seeing such extremes of weather throughout the world with increased floods and famine, tsunamis and tornadoes. This booklet is designed to highlight the importance of water conservation and explore the integral role water plays in Islam. The booklet relates the story of Hajjar (r.a) to emphasise the important role that Muslim women play in Islam and how we should not ignore our duty to protect the planet for our children and future generations.



This guide to Islam and Water is a supplement to the Green Guide for Hajj. This guide will also provide recommendations for individuals and families to implement within their households and communities. In the back of this booklet you will find a CD with a short cartoon about the story of Hajjar (r.a).

The importance of the mother in Islam is reinforced time and again through different narratives. The story of Hajjar (r.a) is just one of the many examples of how highly a woman is regarded in Islam. Fourteen hundred years after the Prophet Muhammad (saw) brought his message to the deserts of Arabia, we still have millions of people every year making the Hajj to Makkah and following in the footsteps of Hajjar (r.a).

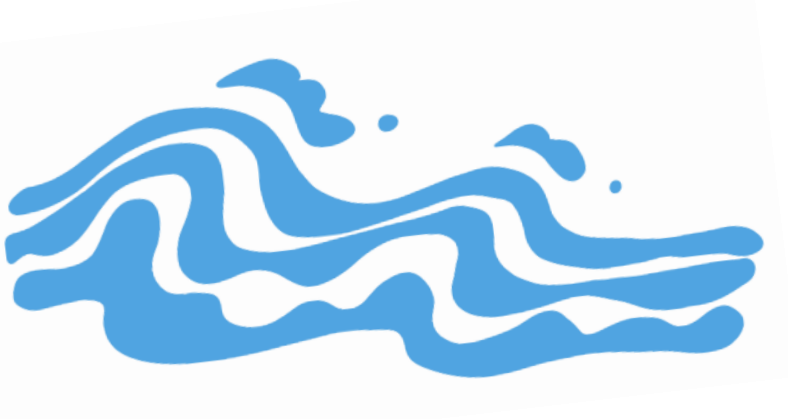
As a mother I know the sacrifices I have had to make in bringing up my children but I cannot even begin to imagine the sacrifice that the wife of Prophet Ibrahim (as), Hajjar (r.a), had to make in accepting her fate with dignity and complete faith in Allah.

When I think of Hajjar (r.a) and how she was left in the desert with her baby son Ismail I wonder how she felt. Did she give up? Did she get depressed and feel utterly useless? No, she did not give up – she had complete trust in Allah ta'ala. She is a true example of a brave and pious woman who knew that she had not been abandoned and that she had a role to play in Allah's great design.

“And when your Lord said to the angels: Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: ‘I will create a vicegerent on earth.’” *[Qur'an 2:30]*

Women, like men, are vicegerents on earth – we have a role to play in protecting and conserving this precious earth.





We as women always underestimate the impact we have on those around us – we are the homemakers, the mothers, the sisters and the daughters of individuals who love and cherish us, look up to us, and are supported and assisted by us.

We as Muslim women should act out of love, not fear. I hope we can all confront the challenges that climate change brings forth with a sense of love, compassion and humanity for each other.

If we take up the baton for environmental change and pass it on to our immediate families, do you know what an enormous impact we can have? Families all around the world will start to think about our environment and the small changes each family make will be multiplied as whole communities and societies are influenced by changes started by YOU. In this booklet the focus is on just one aspect of the environmental agenda – WATER. By a focused approach on water conservation we can have a positive impact on tackling water scarcity.

As Muslim women we should take every opportunity to contemplate and reflect upon nature and our surroundings and recall Allah's grace and mercy:

“And have you seen the water that you drink? Is it you who brought it down from the clouds, or is it We who bring it down? If We willed, We could make it bitter, so why are you not grateful?” *[Qur'an 56: 58-70]*

## 1. Water in Islam

Water is an integral part of Islam and has been embedded in Islamic beliefs and scriptures. As Muslims, it is important to acknowledge water as one of the immense mercies Allah (swt) has bestowed upon us. Using the blessing of water as a source of growth, sustenance and purification, Muslims are required to perform wudhu and ghusl (ablution rituals) using water before prayer throughout the day.

With descriptions of paradise mentioning adorned gardens wherein rivers flow, we know that water will also benefit us in the afterlife, thus reinforcing its importance to mankind. Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an:

“Say: shall I give you glad tidings of things far better than those? For the righteous are Gardens in nearness to their Lord with rivers flowing beneath; Therein is their eternal home; with spouses purified and the good pleasure of Allah, for in Allah's sight are (all) His servants”. *[Qur'an 3:15]*

The mention of rain, fountains and rivers pour through the pages of the Qur'an as a symbol of Allah's (swt) benevolence to mankind. In Surah Al- Furqan, Allah (swt) describes His Mercy:

“And it is He who sends the winds as good tidings before His mercy, and We send down from the sky pure water” *[Quran 25:48]*

In the Qur'an, Muslims are encouraged to constantly contemplate and reflect upon nature and their surroundings so that they may cultivate thankfulness for the blessings they receive. Allah (swt) calls upon the believers to consider the sweet taste that water is made up of and warns mankind that they are no more than guardians on Earth:



“And have you seen the water that you drink? Is it you who brought it down from the clouds, or is it We who bring it down? If We willed, We could make it bitter, so why are you not grateful?” [Qur’an 56: 58-70]



The lessons in the Qur’an are also developed further by the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (saw). In the Hadith (collection of teachings) of Abu Dawud, the Prophet Muhammad (saw) describes water as one of the three wonders of the natural world that every Muslim is entitled to:

“Muslims have common share in three (things). Grass, water and fire”. [Abu Dawod – Book 23, 3470]

## 1.1 Purity in Islam

“...Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves.” [Qur’an 2:222]

The issue of purification is a topic that is discussed rigorously in Islam with the Prophet Muhammad (saw) informing Muslims that cleanliness is half your deen (religion). The Messenger of Allah (SAWS) said: "Cleanliness is half of faith..." [Sahih Muslim Book 2, Number 0432]

In worship, purity is a pre-requisite to prayer and lack of cleanliness invalidates prayer. Allah says in the Qur’an:

“O you who have believed, when you rise to [perform] prayer, wash your faces and your forearms to the elbows



and wipe over your heads and wash your feet to the ankles. And if you are in a state of janabah, then purify yourselves. But if you are ill or on a journey or one of you comes from the place of relieving himself or you have contacted women and do not find water, then seek clean earth and wipe over your faces and hands with it. Allah does not intend to make difficulty for you, but He intends to purify you and complete His favour upon you that you may be grateful". *[Qur'an 5:6]*



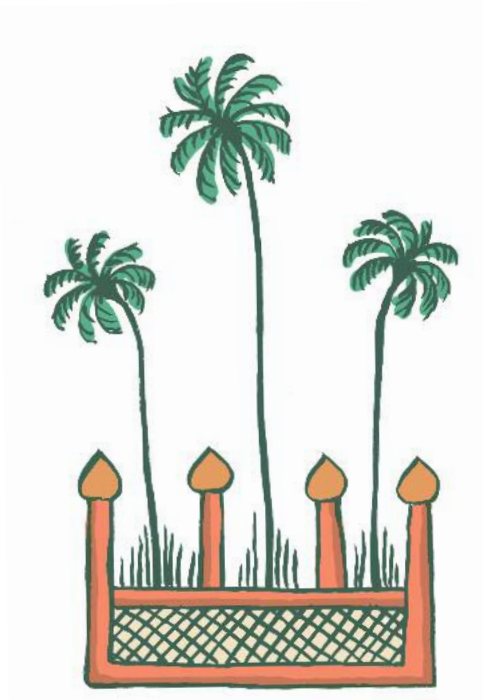
In regards to eating, Islam encourages us to wash our hands before and after. The Prophet Muhammad (saw) said:

"Food is blessed when one washes his hands before and after it." *[Tirmidhi]*

From the descriptions above, we can begin to comprehend the distinguished value that water holds in Islam. In particular, Muslims revere Zam Zam water for its heavenly origins and medicinal properties. The well of Zam Zam found in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, was discovered by Hajjar (May Allah be pleased with her) the wife of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s).

The next section will explore the story of Hajjar (r.a.) and the struggles she encountered as she scoured the desert in search of sustenance for the infant son, Prophet Ishmail (a.s).





## 2. The Story of Hajjar (r.a.)

The story of Hajjar (r.a) is an inspiration to all women not just Muslim women. It is a story of faith in action; it highlights the importance of water for humanity's existence; and it shows how the actions of a woman have been embedded into one of the pillars of Islam.

Hajjar (r.a) was an Egyptian hand-maid and the second wife of Prophet Ibrahim.

The Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) brought his wife Hajjar (r.a) and their young son Ishmail to the desert plains of Makkah, where the Holy Mosque stands today. During this time, the city of Makkah was free from inhabitants and any known source of water. The family camped under the shade of a tree where the Holy Mosque of Makkah was later built when Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) left his wife and son with nothing but a bag filled with dates and a water skin to drink from.



According to Ibn Abbas (may Allah swt be pleased with him) as the Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) departed his family, his dear wife followed him to enquire where he was going saying, "O Abraham! Where are you going, leaving us in this valley where there is no person whose company we may enjoy, nor is there anything (to enjoy)?" She repeated that to him many times, but he did not look back at her then she asked him, "Has Allah ordered you to do so?" He said, "Yes." She said, "Then He will not neglect us," and returned while Abraham proceeded onwards. On reaching the Thaniya where they could not see him, he faced the Ka'ba, and raising both hands, invoked Allah saying the following prayers<sup>1</sup>:

'O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring dwell in a valley without cultivation, by Your Sacred House (Ka'baa at Mecca) in order, O our Lord, that they may offer prayer perfectly. So fill some hearts among men with love towards them, and (O Allah) provide them with fruits, so that they may give thanks.' [Qur'an 14:37]

Hajjar (r.a) stayed with her son and nursed him for a period until they had run out of food and water. Once the water skin was empty, Hajjar (r.a) and her son became thirsty. She witnessed her son tossing and turning in the sand out of thirst. It was a sight that she could not bear. As many mothers, Hajjar (r.a) grew worried. With no-one to help her in sight she left her son at the site of the Ka'ba in search of something to feed him.

She began her search by visiting the top Mount Safa, the nearest mountain to her, in the hope that she may be able to see any other inhabitants or something to help her in the desert. With the scorching desert heat blazing, Hajjar (r.a) raised her sleeve to protect her eyes from the sun and proceeded to climb Mount Marwa hoping to see someone. Growing more frantic, she repeated this act seven times but without avail.

In Sahih Bukhari, Ibn Abbas (May Allah be pleased with him) narrates the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as saying:

<sup>1</sup> Sahih Bukhari: Volume 044, Book 055, Hadith 583

"This is the source of the tradition of the walking of people between them (i.e. Safa and Marwa). When she reached the Marwa (for the last time) she heard a voice and she asked herself to be quiet and listened attentively. She heard the voice again and said, 'O, (whoever you may be)! You have made me hear your voice; have you got something to help me?' And behold! She saw an angel at the place of Zam-Zam, digging the earth with his heel (or his wing), till water flowed from that place. She started to make something like a basin around it, using her hand in this way, and started filling her water-skin with water with her hands, and the water was flowing out after she had scooped some of it." <sup>2</sup>

It was after this incident that Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) narrated in a hadith:

“If she (Hajjar) had left the water, (flow naturally without her intervention), it would have been flowing on the surface of the earth.” <sup>3</sup>

2 Sahih Bukhari: Volume 044, Book 055, Hadith 583

3 Sahih Bukhari: Volume 044, Book 055, Hadith 583



## 2.1 The Significance of Zam Zam

It is due to Hajjar's (r.a) dedication, perseverance, and unwavering faith that we still benefit from the well of Zam Zam today. Hajjar's (r.a) devotion towards her son and Allah (swt) provides us with a prime example of what an exceptional mother she was as well as demonstrating the level of emaan (faith) she possessed. As Muslims, we have been blessed with the opportunity to still drink from the well that our fore-fathers and beloved Prophets drank from. To be able to taste water that is sourced from the heavens itself, strengthens our spiritual connection with them and with Allah (swt).

If you are going on Hajj this year, try to remember the story of Hajjar (r.a) and reflect upon her. In the moments before you walk across the paths between Safa and Marwa, consider your own mother for a moment and reflect on how she, like Hajjar (r.a.) would make sacrifices for you.

## 2.2 Health Benefits of Zam Zam

Zam Zam water also possesses various health benefits. It is narrated by Abu Dhar (r.a) that Rasoul'Allah (s.a.w) said "It is a blessing, and it is food that satisfies."<sup>4</sup> Imam Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah said:

"Zam zam water is the best and noblest of all waters, the highest in status, the dearest to people, the most precious and valuable to them. It was dug by Jibril and is the water with which Allah quenched the thirst of Ismail (a.s)."



4 Muslim

### 3. Water Conservation Around the World

**Water conservation** is a practice followed by individuals who wish to save water by using it more wisely. As we are all dependent on water for our survival, it is crucial for us to learn and understand how we can preserve it for the benefit of generations to come. There is a misconception that water conservation is a process that can only be dealt with on a grand scale by technicians, natural scientists, engineers and farmers. However, it is an issue that can also be tackled by you and me.

Water conservation is clearly linked to water scarcity, which is one of the major issues of our time. The rapid growth of population in the world raises serious concerns about the growing demand for water. In addition, countries across the world, regardless of wealth, are facing growing concerns over the amount of safe drinking water available. It is estimated that over 1.1 billion people today lack access to clean drinking water – roughly one sixth of the world’s population.

Half of the children born in the developing world will live in households without access to improved water and sanitation, which puts their survival and development at grave risk. As a result of poor hygiene and lack of access to water and sanitation, 1.5 million children under five die every year because of diarrhoeal diseases alone.

Ensuring that our brothers and sisters in all parts of the world have easy access to safe drinking water is our responsibility as Muslims. The Prophet Muhammad (saw) gave us a prime example of this by saying:

“The Muslim Ummah is like one body. If the eye is in pain then the whole body is in pain and if the head is in pain then the whole body is in pain.”

This is why we all need to work to make our water safe to drink, to conserve it and to use it wisely. Mothers, like Hajjar (r.a.) can be at the forefront of this, leading the way to preserve water as a precious and blessed resource central to our faith and to the survival of our planet.

## 4. Recommendations

Here are some suggestions for how we may play our part, wherever we live.

### 4.1 Tips for developed countries

- **Wudhu in a bucket:** As a Muslim it is important to enliven the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (saw) wherever we can. The Prophet (saw) warned against waste in many hadiths and used a minimal amount of water when making wudhu. One method could be filling a small bucket of water and using that small amount to complete your wudhu in. This provides a clear measure of how much you used and what you have wasted.
- **Trade bottled water for tap water:** In a society riddled by choice, we choose to spend money on bottled water as opposed to drinking the clean water we have available in our homes and workplace. Living in the developed world means that our water undergoes stringent testing even before it reaches our taps, ensuring that it is safe and clean to drink. Why not challenge yourself to make the switch to tap water for a week and see how much money you can save.
- **Habits at home:** There are many simple ways of saving water and money in the home, try to implement some of these tips with the family as a challenge and see who lasts the longest!
  - **Running tap water:** One of the largest contributors to water waste is leaving the tap running when it is not needed. Whether you are brushing your teeth or washing the dishes, try not to use water unless it is required. You could even try to turn water off whilst washing your hair and only using it to rinse.

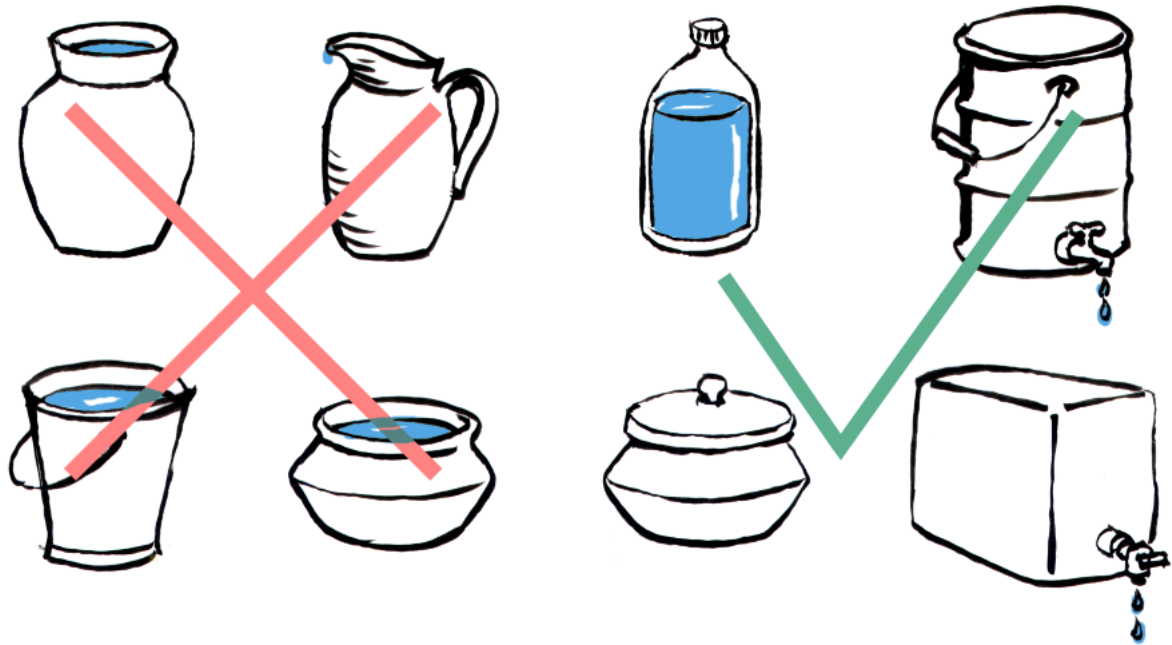


- **Take shorter showers:** Try to encourage your family to take shorter showers. Cutting your shower time down by one minute per person can have a substantial effect on reducing your water bill and wastage.
- **Install water saving gadgets:** Installing gadgets like water saving shower heads will decrease overall water usage. Many people believe that such products only release a tiny amount of water which is insufficient to shower in. However, some of the products available have been developed to such a high quality that there is no apparent difference to your regular shower head.
- **Monitor water bills:** Make sure you regularly check your water bill for any unusual changes. Irregular changes to water bills could mean that there is a water leak in the household, resulting in the increase of water waste and the bill.
- **Recycle water:** When cooking, we tend to waste water rinsing salads, fruits and vegetables. Use a bowl filled with water to rinse foods and use the rest to water plants in the garden – this is an excellent method to prevent water waste at home.
- **Wash clothes in warm water and minimise your use of the washing machine:** Coloured clothes especially can be cleaned just as well in a warm machine wash. Wait to have a large load for washing.
- **Xeriscaping:** This process refers to landscaping and gardening in a method that will reduce the need for external water. Xeriscaping is used widely in the US state of California and is encouraged in areas with low water supplies. If you are planning to work on your garden, consider xeriscaping as an option – there are plenty of attractive designs to choose from.

## 4.2 Tips for developing countries

Water scarcity is a worldwide issue and affects us all differently. Below are suggestions specifically tailored to the needs of those living in the developing world.

- **Rain water harvesting:** You can prepare for the dry seasons by making the most of the wet seasons. Collect rain water to use for washing clothes and basic family uses by constructing a simple rooftop tank.
- **Storage and water purification:** Make sure you disinfect water by boiling it and then storing it in a covered container:



☀️ **Think of how you can treat the water in your household to make it safe to drink:** Sunlight, for example can be used to inactivate harmful micro organisms in water almost completely. Transparent plastic (PET) or glass bottles filled with contaminated, but clear water are exposed to the sun for six hours in sunny weather or two days in cloudy weather. If a temperature of 50 degrees Celsius is reached, an exposure time of one hour is sufficient. You can learn more at [www.sodis.ch](http://www.sodis.ch) or [www.simavi.org](http://www.simavi.org)

☀️ **Importance of hand washing:** The Messenger of Allah (SAWS) said: "Cleanliness is half of faith..." [*Sahih Muslim Book 2, Number 0432*]. By washing your hands with soap you are preventing the risk of diarrhoeal infections and even respiratory infections.

Here is an example of a widely used hand-washing device used where piped water is hard to get, called the Tippy-Tap.

For further suggestions and details, our partner ARC recommends the simple booklets prepared by Netherlands Water Partnership: *Smart Water Solutions*, *Smart Water Harvesting Solutions* and *Smart Hygiene Solutions*. You can download these books from the IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre website: <http://www.irc.nl/>



❁ **Planting trees:** Deforestation is another major threat to the ecological stability of many developing countries around the world. Trees play an integral role in water conservation efforts. We rely on trees as a source of life, for food, fuel and building materials but trees also help absorb water from rain, prevent erosion and keep soil fertile. Support the planting of trees in your community. Why not encourage your family to invest in planting a tree. The Prophet Muhammad (saw) said:

“If a Muslim farms the land or plants a tree, and then a bird, a beast or a man eats something from it, he receives in return the reward of a charity.”



## 5. Conclusion

I hope that this booklet has inspired you to reflect on your position in this world and the positive contribution that you as a woman of faith can make to improve this earth.

If you give some thought to the story of Hajjar (r.a) you can see how her dedication, perseverance, and unwavering faith has enabled us to still benefit from the well of Zam Zam today. Hajjar's (r.a) devotion towards her son and Allah (swt) provides us with a prime example of what an exceptional mother she was, but it also demonstrates the level of emaan (faith) she possessed. As Muslims, we have been blessed with the opportunity to still drink from the well that our fore-fathers and beloved Prophets drank from. To be able to taste water that is sourced from the heavens itself strengthens our spiritual connection with Allah (swt) by cementing our faith.

Those of you who have completed the journey of Hajj know that the pilgrim's passage across the two mountains Safa and Marwa is a great deal easier today than that of Hajjar's (r.a). Let her struggle be the impetus for you to raise awareness about water conservation in your communities and nations. Consider how many Muslim sisters are struggling every day with water scarcity or undrinkable water.

Spend some time showing your children the cartoon of Hajjar (r.a) at the back of this booklet and let it inspire them to think about water differently.

It is time for us all to reflect on our position in this world and the positive contribution that woman of faith can make to improving this earth.

## Glossary

*Bismillah ir Rahman ir Raheem* – In the Name of Allah, The Most Compassionate, The Merciful.

*Deen* – The Arabic word commonly associated with Islam referring to one's religion and way of life.

*Hadith* – Collection of sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) that report the Sunnah (practices) which Muslims aim to implement into their daily lives.

*Mudd* – A form of measurement during the time of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). One Mudd is equivalent to two full hand cups of water.

*Radi Allahu 'Anhu (RA)* – May Allah be pleased with him or her.

*Rasul'Allah* – Title given to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) meaning the Apostle of Allah.

*Salah* – The Arabic term for prayer and one of the five pillars of Islam that Muslims are required to perform five times a day.

*Salallahu 'Alayhi Wasalam (SAW)* – May the Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him.

*Subhana Wa Ta'ala (SWT)* – May He Be Glorified and Exhaulted. Sometimes shortened to Ta'ala.

*Wudhu* – The purification ritual performed before prayer, referred to as ablution in English. Muslims are required to wash body parts with water to cleanse themselves before standing before Allah. The term Ghusl is a higher form of Wudhu consisting of a full bath.

*Zam Zam Water* – The name given to the holy water of Makkah that was discovered by Hajjar (r.a), wife of the Prophet Ibrahim (RA). Muslims believe Zam Zam to possess heavenly qualities with the ability to heal illnesses and is regularly brought home for the sick from Hajj and Umrah.

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