

Fasting the Month of *Ramadaan*

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The blessed month of *Ramadaan* is just around the corner. We should prepare ourselves to receive this month with sincerity in our fasting and our nightly prayers, so that we can receive the utmost reward of forgiveness and Paradise from *Allaah* (S.W.T.). *Aameen*.

Allaah (S.W.T.) says in the *Qur'aan* what can be translated as, “**O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you so that you may achieve *Taqwaa* (righteousness, God-fearing).**” [*Suratul-Baqarah*, (verse 183)]

The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said, “*Whoever observes the fast during the month of Ramadaan, believing in Allaah and seeking His rewards, will have his past sins forgiven.*” [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari, Muslim and others]

Fasting the month of *Ramadaan* is one of the main pillars of *Islaam*. It is obligatory upon every sane, healthy, adult Muslim who is not traveling during the time of fasting. As for women, they must not fast if they are menstruating or having post-childbirth bleeding.

The Arrival of *Ramadaan*

There are two ways to confirm whether *Ramadaan* has arrived or not, either way is sufficient to confirm the beginning of *Ramadaan*. The first way to determine the beginning of *Ramadaan* is for at least one trustworthy person to observe the crescent moon, after sunset on the 29th day of the month of *Sha'baan*. If the crescent moon is not sighted, then we must complete thirty days of the month of *Sha'baan* before we can begin fasting.

Ibn 'Umar (R.A.) said: "The people were looking for the crescent moon and when I reported to the Messenger of *Allaah* that I had seen it, he fasted and ordered the people to fast." [Reported by Imaam Abu Dawud and others]

Abu Hurairah (R.A.) reported that the prophet (S.A.W.) said, "*Fast after you have seen it (the new crescent) and end the fast (at the end of the month) when you see it again. If it is hidden from you, then wait until the thirty days of Sha'ban have passed.*" [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari and Muslim]

According to a majority of scholars, it does not matter if the crescent moon has been sighted in a different location. In other words, after the crescent moon is seen anywhere in the world, it becomes obligatory for all Muslims to begin fasting, as the prophet (S.A.W.) said: "*Fast due to its sighting and break the fast due to its sighting.*" This *hadiith* is a general address directed to the whole Muslim *Ummaah*, that is, if any one of you sees the crescent moon in place, then that will be a confirmation for everyone.

However, some scholars such as Imaam Ash-Shaafi hold the opinion that every region should only consider their own local sighting and are not required to follow the sightings of other areas.

The Essential Elements of the Fast

There are two essential elements for your fast to be valid and accepted. They are:

1. The Intention: You must have the intention to fast before *fajr* (dawn) every night during the month of *Ramadaan*. The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said, "*He who does not have the intention to fast before it is Fajr, then there is no fast for him.*" [Reported by Imaams At-Tirmidhi, An-Nasaa'ee and Abuu Dawud]

The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) also said, "*Actions are judged according to the intentions behind them...*" [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari and Muslim]

The intention does not need to be spoken, because in reality it is an act of the heart, which does not involve the tongue. It will be fulfilled by one's intention from the heart to fast out of obedience to Allaah (S.W.T.), seeking His pleasure.

2. Abstaining from Acts that Nullify the Fast: The second essential element for your fast to be accepted is that you abstain from the acts that nullify the fast from dawn to sunset. Allaah (S.W.T.) says in the *Qur'aan* what can be translated as, "**It is made lawful for you to have sexual relations with your wives on the night of the fast...And eat and drink until the white thread (light) of dawn appears to you distinct from the black thread (darkness of night).**" [*Suratul-Baqarah*, (verse 187)]

If you maintain these two essential elements during fasting, then your fast will be valid and accepted.

The Six Actions that Invalidate the Fast

All scholars have agreed that the following acts will invalidate the fast. They are:

- 1&2. Intentional Eating or Drinking: If someone eats or drinks due to forgetfulness, a mistake or coercion, then his fast is still valid and should continue to fast.

The prophet (S.A.W.) said: "*If any of you eats and drinks out of forgetfulness, then let him complete his fast, for it was indeed Allah who gave him food and drink.*" [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari and Muslim]

The prophet (S.A.W.) also said: "*Allaah has excused my Ummah for the actions they have committed by mistake, forgetfulness and for whatever they are forced to do.*" [Reported by Imaams Al-Haakim and Ad-Daraqatni]

3. Intentional Vomiting: If one is overcome and vomits unintentionally, then he should continue to fast. The prophet (S.A.W.) said: "*Whoever is overwhelmed by vomiting, then no atonement is required of him, but whoever vomits intentionally then let him atone for it.*" [Reported by Imaams Abu Daawud, At-Tirmidhi, Ibn Maajah and Ahmad]

4. Intentional Sexual Intercourse: If one has sexual intercourse then he must perform *kaffarah*, expiation (Fasting continuously for sixty days or feeding sixty poor people).

A man came to the prophet (S.A.W.) and said: O Messenger of Allaah, I am destroyed. I had sexual intercourse with my wife during *Ramadaan*. The prophet (S.A.W.) said: "*Are you able to free a slave?*" The man said: "No." The prophet (S.A.W.) asked: "*Are you able to fast two months*

consecutively?" The man again replied: "No." The prophet (S.A.W.) then asked; *"Are you able to feed sixty poor people?"* Again, the man said: "No." The prophet (S.A.W.) said: *"Then sit."* So he sat down. Then a large basket of palm leaves containing dates was brought to the prophet (S.A.W.) and he said: *"Give this in charity."* The man then said: There is no one between the two sides (of Al-Madinah) poorer than us. So the prophet (S.A.W.) smiled until his molars became visible and said: *"Take it and feed it to your family."* [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari and Muslim]

5&6. Menstrual & Childbirth Bleeding Invalidate the Fast: The fast becomes invalid during menstrual or post-childbirth bleeding. Even if such bleeding begins just before sunset, the fast of that day is invalid and the day must be made up.

Aa'ishah (R.A.) said: "(Menstruation) used to happen to us (women) when the prophet was alive and so we were ordered (by the prophet) to make up the missed fasts, but we were never ordered to make up the missed prayers." [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari and Muslim]

Note: All the actions mentioned above are agreed upon by all scholars. However, there are some other actions that are not mentioned above which are not agreed upon.

Action that are Permissible During Fasting

There are some actions that are permissible to do during fasting, which will not nullify the fast. For example:

1. Taking a shower: It is permissible to shower even if you are showering due to thirst or being overheated. Ibn Umar (R.A.) soaked a garment in water and put it over himself while he was fasting..." [Reported by Imaam Bukhaari]

And the prophet (S.A.W.) used to pour water over his head while fasting due to thirst or the heat." [Reported by Imaams Ahmad and Abu Dawud]

2. Rinsing the Mouth and Nose: It is permissible to rinse the mouth and nose without exaggeration; over exaggerating may cause the water to enter your stomach. The prophet (S.A.W.) used to wash his mouth and nose while fasting and he said: *"...And sniff water into your nose strongly unless you are fasting."* [Reported by Imaams Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi and An-Naasa'i]

3. Applying Eyeliner or Eye Drops: It is permissible to apply *kohl* (eyeliner) or eye drops or anything else to the eyes, even if some taste from it finds its way to the throat. "...Anas (R.A.), Al-Hasan Al-Basri and Ibrahiim An-Nakha'i did not see any harm in the use of *kohl* for the fasting person." [Reported by Imaam Bukhaari]

4. Taking Injections: It is also permissible to take injections for nutritional or medical purposes; there is no text that proves this invalidates the fast.

5. Taking Suppositories: Similarly, it is permissible to have an enema or douche. The injection of liquid into the rectum through the anus for cleansing, as a laxative, or for other therapeutic purposes, or the use of a suppository (a solid medication designed to melt within a body cavity) or any other medicine that can be used in the private parts, whether in the front or back is permissible. There is no text that considers these acts to nullify the fast.

6. Accidental Consumption: Your fast will not become invalid if you consume something that you could not protect yourself from. For example, swallowing your saliva or accidentally swallowing dust or sifted flour that has accidentally entered your mouth.
7. Tasting Food with the Tongue: Your fast will be valid even if you taste food with your tongue or use toothpaste or mouthwash as long as nothing is swallowed.
Ibn Abbaas (R.A.) said: " There is no harm for a person who tastes vinegar or anything while he is fasting as long as it does not enter his throat." [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari and others]
8. Breathing in Different Scents: It is permissible to smell or breathe in any kind of odors or scents including medicinal inhalers or vapor rubs that might enter the lungs.
9. Kissing and Embracing One's Spouse: It is permissible to kiss and embrace your spouse as long as one is able to control oneself. A'aisha (R.A.) said: "Allah's Messenger (S.A.W.) used to kiss and embrace (his wives) while he was fasting, and he had more power to control his desires than any of you." [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari and Muslim]
10. Drawing Blood: It is also permissible to draw blood in any amount for any reason, unless it will weaken the person.
Ibn Abbaas (R.A.) reported that the prophet (S.A.W.) was cupped, (in which his blood was drawn) while fasting." [Reported by Imaam Bukhaari]
11. Being in a State of Janaabah: Your fast will still be valid even if you find yourself in a state of *janaabah* (a major ritual impurity) after *fajr* (dawn) has arrived. *Ghusl* (a full bath) can still be performed once the time of *fajr* has begun.

Aa'ishah and Umm Salamah (R.A.) said: "Sometimes the prophet (S.A.W.) was in state of *janaabah* from his wives and *fajr* came upon him, then he would bathe and fast." [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari and Muslim]

Exclusions from Fasting

There are certain situations when it is optional to fast during the month of *Ramadaan*, however, the fast must be made up at a later date. This is the rule for the sick or for the one who is traveling. Allaah (S.W.T.) says in the *Qur'aan* what can be translated as, "**...But if any of you is ill or on a journey, the same number** (should be made up) **from other days...**" [*Suratul-Baqarah*, (verse184)]

However, women who are experiencing post-childbirth bleeding or are in their menses are not allowed to fast until their bleeding ends. They must make up the days they missed fasting at a later date. This has been proven by a *hadiith* from Ai'shah, which has been mentioned above.

For those who cannot fast due to a permanent illness or old age, they have to pay *fidiya* (feeding one poor person) for each day that they have missed. Allaah (S.W.T.) says in the *Qur'aan* what can be translated as, "**And as for those who can fast**, (with difficulty, e.g. old age, permanent illness, etc.) **they have** (a choice either to fast or) **to feed a poor person** (for each day)." [*Suratul-Baqarah*, (verse184)]

Pregnant and nursing women, who are afraid that fasting may weaken them or the child, have the option of fasting or not. After *Ramadaan* ends, they have the choice of fasting or paying *fidiyah*

(feeding one poor person) for each day that they had missed during *Ramadaan*. This was the opinion held by Ibn Abbaas, Ibn Umar (R.A.) and others.

Concerning the part of the verse mentioned above which states, "**And for those who can fast (with difficulty)**" Ibn Abbaas explained that, "This verse was meant as a special consideration for the elderly, because they can fast, but with difficulty. Instead of fasting, they can feed one poor person for each day they miss. This also includes pregnant or breast-feeding women, if they fear for the child, then they can do the same." [Reported by Imaam Abu Dawud] Also Imaam al-Bazaar adds in the end of his narration that "Ibn 'Abbaas (R.A.) used to say to his wives who were pregnant: "You are in the same situation as those who can fast (with difficulty). You are to pay the *fidiyah* and you do not have to make up the days later." [Imaam Ad-Daaraqatni confirms its authenticity]

Also Naafi' reported that Ibn 'Umar (R.A.) was asked about a pregnant woman who feared for her unborn baby. He replied: "She is to break the fast and to feed one poor person one *moudd* (a measurement of quantity) of barley each day." [Reported by Imaams Maalik and Al-Bayhaqi]

However, according to the Hanafi School of jurists, such women are only to make up the missed days of fasting, and they are not supposed to feed one poor person a day. According to Imaams Ahmad and Ash-Shaafi, if such women fear only for the baby, they must pay the *fidiyah* and make up the days later. If they fear only for themselves or for themselves and the baby, then they are only to make up the missed days at a later date.

Recommended Acts During Ramadaan

There are some acts that are recommended, and if you practice them, you will gain more rewards from Allaah (S.W.T.). Such as:

1. Having *suhuur* (pre-dawn meal) and delaying it until just before *fajr* time. The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said, "*You should have suhuur for it is blessed nourishment.*" [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari and Muslim] And the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said, "*My Ummah will always be with the good as they hasten in breaking the fast and delay as-suhuur.*"
The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) also said, "*If one of you hears the call (for fajr) and the drinking vessel is still in his hand then let him not put it down until he satisfies his need from it.*" [Reported by Imaams Abu Dawud, Ahmad and others]
2. We should also hurry to break the fast at sunset. The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said, "*The people will always be with the good as they hasten in breaking the fast (at sunset).*" [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari and Muslim]
3. Another recommended act is that we break the fast by eating an odd number of fresh or dry dates, and if those are not available, then having a drink of water would be sufficient.
"The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) used to break the fast with fresh dates before praying (maghrib), if not with fresh dates then with dry dates, and if not with dates then with a mouthful of water." [Reported by Imaams Abu Dawud and At-Tirmidhi]
4. Also we can earn rewards by supplicating at the time of breaking the fast, as the prophet used to say, "*The thirst has gone, the veins are moistened and Allah willing, the reward is confirmed.*"
5. Another recommended act is that we pray *taraaweeh* daily after '*ishaa*'.

'Aa'ishah, (R.A) reported that Allaah's Messenger (S.A.W.) went out in the middle of the night (during *Ramadaan*) and prayed in the mosque, and the people prayed behind him, then in the morning the people spoke about it. Then a larger number gathered (the second night), and while he prayed, the people prayed behind him. The following morning, the people spoke about it. On the third night the mosque was crowded, so Allaah's Messenger came out and the people prayed behind him. On the fourth night, the mosque could not accommodate the number of people, but he only came out for the morning prayer (*fajr*). Then when he finished the morning prayer, he turned to the people and said: "*Indeed your presence was not hidden from me, but I feared that it (taraaweeh) would be made obligatory upon you and that you would not be able to manage it.*" So Allah's Messenger (S.A.W.) passed away and the situation remained like that.

This *sunnah* was revived by the rightly guided Caliph 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab (R.A.) as is mentioned by 'Abdur-Rahmaan ibn 'Abdin al-Qaaree (R.A.) who said: I went out along with 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab (R.A.), in *Ramadaan* to the mosque and found the people praying in separate groups- a man praying alone or a man leading a small group. So 'Umar said: "I think it would be better if I gathered them all behind a single reciter." Then he made up his mind and gathered them behind Ubayy Ibn Ka'b. Then I went out with him on another night and the people were praying behind their reciter, so 'Umar said: "What an excellent innovation this is (to pray *taraweeh* as one congregation), and prayer during the last part of the night (*tahajjud*) when people usually sleep is better than praying now (after '*ishaa*' at the early part of the night.)

How many rak'as did the prophet (S.A.W.) pray during taraweeh?

The prophet prayed eight *rak'as*, not including the *witr*, this is proven by the *hadiith* of 'Aa'isha (R.A.) who said: "Allah's Messenger did not increase the number of *rak'as* prayed over eleven during *Ramadaan*, or outside of it (*Ramadaan*)." [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari and Muslim]

This statement of 'Aa'ishah (R.A.), is confirmed by Jaabir bin Abdilaah (R.A.) who mentioned: "When the prophet led the people in prayer, during the nights of *Ramadaan*, he prayed eight *rak'ahs* and the *witr*." [Reported by Imaam Ibn Hibbaan]

6. Another recommended act during *Ramadaan* is that we increase our recitation and study of the *Qur'aan*. This is because the revelation of the *Qur'aan* began during this time, and also Angel Gabriel used to review the *Qur'aan* with the Prophet during this month.

7. We can also gain rewards by using *Miswaak* (a piece of root from the *Araak* tree found in the *Hijaaz* region of the Arabian Peninsula used to clean the teeth), if not available, any other cleaning tool to clean the mouth is sufficient.

The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said, "*If it were not that I would be putting my Ummah to hardship I would have ordered them to use the Siwaak along with every Wudoo.*" [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari and Muslim]

And also in another *hadith* the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said, "*If it were not that I would be putting my Ummah to hardship I would have ordered them to use the Siwaak along with every prayer.*" [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari and Muslim] In both *ahadiith* the prophet did not exclude the fasting person from using it. (This is the view of Imaam Al-Bukhaari, Ibn Khuzaimah and other scholars)