

FASTING THE MONTH OF RAMADAN

A. Obligation of Fasting Ramadan

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. May Allah raise the rank of our master Muhammad ﷺ, his Al and Companions, and protect his nation from that which he fears for it.

Fasting the month of Ramadan is an obligatory and great worship. It is among the best acts of obedience. In Fasting there is a great reward. Imam al-Bukhariyy related the Qudsiyy hadith that the Prophet ﷺ said that Allah said:

which means: <<The reward of every good deed is multiplied from ten up to seven- hundred times. However, the reward of Fasting, done in sincerity, will be multiplied by as many times as Allah wills.>>, i.e., more than 700 times, One of the doors of Paradise, named ar-Rayyan, is specified for those Muslims who used to fast in this world. On the Day of Judgment, it will be opened, and those who used to fast in obedience to Allah will be called to enter through that door. After they enter, ar-Rayyan will be closed, and no one else will enter through it.

The month of Ramadan is the ninth month of the lunar year. It is the best month of the year, as the night of al-Qadr in Ramadan is the best night of the year. Fasting became an obligation on the Muslims in the second year after the Prophetic emigration. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ fasted Ramadan for nine years, after which he died.

The obligation on the believers of fasting Ramadan is known from the Qur'an and the Hadith. It was explicitly stated in Verse 183 of Surat al-Baqarah:

which means: [O believers, Fasting is an obligation upon you as it was ordained upon the (Muslim nations) before you to help you become pious.] Fasting was an obligation upon the nations before the nation of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ . However, fasting the month of Ramadan in particular is a specification for the nation of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ only.

Moreover, Prophet *Muhammad* ﷺ named Fasting the month of *Ramadan* as one of the five most important matters of *Islam* in the famous *hadith*, known as "*Hadith Jibril*", as related by *al-Bukhariyy* and *Muslim*. Angel *Jibril* came to the Prophet ﷺ in the shape of a man with white clothes and asked the Prophet ﷺ to inform him about *Islam*. In response, the Prophet ﷺ said:

which means: <<*Islam* is bearing witness that no one is God except *Allah* and *Muhammad* ﷺ is the Messenger of *Allah*, performing Prayer, paying *Zakah*, Fasting the month of *Ramadan*, and performing Pilgrimage if you are able.>>

Consequently, for the one who has learned of its obligation, renouncing the obligation of Fasting the month of *Ramadan* is blasphemy, because it entails belying *Allah* and the Prophet ﷺ. However, the one who believes Fasting is an obligation, yet does not perform it (without a valid excuse) does not blaspheme, although his neglecting to fast is an enormous sin.

B. Determining the Beginning of *Ramadan*

The obligation of fasting the month of *Ramadan* becomes incumbent upon the occurrence of one of two matters: to sight the crescent of *Ramadan* after the sunset of the 29th day of *Sha^ban* (the month directly preceding *Ramadan*) or, if the crescent is not seen, then completing thirty (30) days of *Sha^ban*. So, the beginning of the month of *Ramadan*, as well as the end of the month, is determined by sighting the crescent. If the crescent was not sighted, then the month would be completed by 30 days, as is the case with determining all the months of the lunar calendar. This is taken from the *hadith* of the Prophet ﷺ related by *al-Bukhariyy* and *Muslim*:

which means: <<Do not fast one or two days before *Ramadan*. Start the month when you see the crescent, and end it when you see the crescent. If you are blocked from seeing it, then complete thirty days of *Sha^ban*.>>

So, on the 29th day of *Sha^ban*, directly after the sun sets, Muslims look towards the western horizon. If the crescent (of the new moon) is seen, the following day will be the first day of *Ramadan*. If it is not seen, *Sha^ban* ^ban, and the day after that is the first day of *Ramadan*. The Islamic judge confirms the beginning of *Ramadan* if one upright *Muslim*, whose testimony is acceptable to the judge, bears witness he saw the crescent. Several conditions must be met for a person's testimony to be acceptable to the judge

in this matter. He must be *Muslim*, male, pubescent, free, clear of enormous sins, clear of having his sins exceed his acts of obedience, and abiding by the manners of the people of his class. The testimony of a person who does not satisfy these conditions, or non- *Muslim*, a woman, a child, one who commits enormous sins, or a slave, is not acceptable. The judge does not confirm the beginning of the month of *Ramadan*. He does not announce to the general public to commence fasting relying solely upon their testimony. However, if just one upright *Muslim*, who has satisfied the aforementioned conditions testified to the judge he saw the crescent, the judge would confirm the beginning of *Ramadan* for the next day. This is known from the *hadith* related by *Abu Dawud* from the route of *^Abdullah Ibn ^Umar*.

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" *^Abdullah Ibn ^Umar* told the Prophet ﷺ he had sighted the crescent, so the Prophet ﷺ fasted the next day and ordered the others to fast as well.

Be warned of those who determine the month of *Ramadan* relying upon astronomical calculation. Prophet *Muhammad* ﷺ informed us that such calculations are not relied upon in determining such matters. *Imam Ahmad* related in his *Musnad* that the Prophet ﷺ said:

which means: <<We are a nation which does not depend on writings and calculations [to determine the beginning of the month]. The month is either twenty-nine or thirty days.>> Praise be to *Allah* , how easy the matter is! Any *Muslim* with sound sight can observe the crescent. He does not need to rely on complex calculations which only a few people understand.

C. Who Must Fast *Ramadan*

The first condition for one to be obligated to fast is to be *Muslim*. In this world, we do not request from the non- *Muslim* to fast; however, in the Hereafter, he will be punished for neglecting to fast, as he will be punished for his blasphemy. Rather, the obligation on the non- *Muslim* is to embrace *Islam*, then among many obligations, is to fast *Ramadan*.

Secondly, the *Muslim* must be pubescent. The child is not obligated to fast. However, it is an obligation on the guardian of the child to order him or her to fast once he or she is seven (lunar) years old, with the condition that the child's body can withstand fasting, without being harmed.

Also, for one to be obligated to fast, one must be of sound mind. Fasting is not obligatory on the insane person.

Fasting is not obligatory on a person whose body cannot tolerate fasting, either due to old age or severe illness. Moreover, if a person may be harmed

by fasting, that is, as a result of his fasting his sickness may worsen or he may die, then fasting is prohibited for him. The person who does not fast because of old age or an illness he is not hopeful to be cured of, does not have to make up the missed days of fasting. Instead, he pays an expiation to a poor Muslim for every day of fasting he missed. He can pay the expiation for every missed day to the same person or he can choose to pay it to different people. The expiation is a pair of average-sized hands cupped together (*mudd*) filled with the most common staple food of the town. In the United States, for example, the most common staple food is wheat.

Fasting is not obligatory on the menstruating woman or the woman who has her postpartum bleeding. In fact, it is unlawful for them to fast. The woman who missed days of fasting during *Ramadan* for these reasons has to make up each missed day.

Also, the pregnant woman is allowed not to fast if she fears harm may come to her or her baby from her fasting. This includes the breastfeeding woman as well. She is allowed not to fast if she fears harm may come to her or her baby from her fasting. Both, the pregnant and nursing women, must make up every missed day of fasting. If the reason such a woman did not fast was solely the fear of harming her baby, then in addition to making up the missed days of fasting, she must pay an expiation. This expiation is a pair of average-sized hands cupped together filled with the most common staple food of the area where she lived, for each day she missed.

The person who is traveling a walking distance of two or more days (about 80 miles) is allowed not to fast, provided his traveling is not sinful. This traveler is permitted not to fast even though he may not encounter hardship during his trip, such as if he crosses this distance quickly, by plane, or comfortably, in a car or a train. The matter of traveling is not based on the hardship; rather, it has to do with the distance. This facility for the traveler was mentioned in the *Qur'an*. *Allah* said in *Surat al-Baqarah*, Verse 185:



which means: <<If one is sick or traveling, then one is allowed not to fast and one makes up the missed days later.>>

D. Integrals⁽¹⁾ of Fasting

The integrals of fasting are two:

1. To make the intention each night to fast the following day of *Ramadan*.
2. To abstain, during the time from the dawn until sunset, from inserting any substance into the head or the body cavity through an open inlet, excluding

¹ An integral of fasting is that part of fasting without which the fasting is not valid.

one's pure, tahir saliva while still inside the mouth and to abstain from sexual intercourse, masturbation, inducing vomit, and apostasy.

Making the intention at night to fast the following day of *Ramadan* means to have the intention in one's heart to fast during the night preceding the fasting day, i.e., after the sunset and before the dawn of the following day. Sometime during that time, the person must make the intention to fast the following day. This must be done each night for the following day of fasting. As related by *at-Tirmidhiyy*, *an-Nasa'iyy*, and others, the Prophet ﷺ said:

which means: <<There is no fasting for the one who does not establish the intention for fasting the night before.>>

The intention is in the heart, and does not have to be uttered with the tongue. The one who sleeps at night without having had the intention to fast and wakes up after the dawn misses the time of the intention. Although fasting is not valid for him that day, he is obligated to abstain from whatever a fasting person must abstain from that day. In addition, he must later make up that day. If the menstrual or postpartum bleeding of a woman stops at night, then she must intend to fast the following day. The purificatory bath (*ghusl*) is not required for her to start fasting, but rather to start praying.

The intention for any obligatory fasting of *Ramadan* must take place the night before the fast. However, the intention time for an optional fasting is extended until *Dhuhr* time, as long as one does not commit any of the invalidators of fasting since the dawn appeared.

The fasting person must abstain from taking into his body cavity any substance from an open inlet, whether this substance is food, drink, or otherwise. A person's fast is invalidated if he intentionally inserts such a substance during the fasting day, while remembering he is fasting and knowing that it is unlawful to do so. However, if he breaks his fasting under threat of being killed, his fast is not invalidated. This person must make up the fast day(s) he invalidated without an excuse. The open inlets of the body are like the mouth, nose, anus, vagina, and others. Materials which are absorbed by the pores of the skin do not invalidate the fast, because the pores of the skin are not considered to be an open inlet to the body cavity. For example, rubbing oil into the skin does not invalidate the fast.

Swallowing one's own pure saliva, while still inside the mouth, does not invalidate the fast. However, the fast would be invalidated if some saliva dangled outside the mouth, and separated from the tongue, even to the lips, then was taken back in and swallowed. In addition, if the saliva in the mouth is mixed with something else, whether pure or not, then swallowed, this invalidates the fast.

One's fast is not invalidated by what is too hard to protect oneself from swallowing. This includes the dust of the street, the dust of the flour, and the

like. Although smoking a cigarette breaks the fast of the smoker himself, it does not break the fast of the person next to him who breathes in some of that smoke. It also does not break the fast for one to breathe in the odor of incense or other fragrances.

Another condition for the validity of fasting is for one to abstain from sexual intercourse during the day of fasting. If the person does not know that he must abstain from sexual intercourse during the fasting day, or he forgets that he is fasting and performs this act, then this does not invalidate his fast. However, the man or woman who performs sexual intercourse during the day of fasting while knowing it is unlawful to do so and remembering that he/she is fasting, does invalidate his/her fast. The expiation, which is due on the man only, for invalidating his fasting by sexual intercourse is in the following order:

1. To free a Muslim slave,
2. If unable, then to fast two consecutive lunar months, in addition to making up the day which was invalidated by his sexual intercourse;
3. If unable, then to feed each one of sixty (60) poor Muslims the fill of a pair of average-sized hands cupped together (i.e, one *mudd*) of the most common staple food of the area.

Masturbation by one's own hand or the hand of one's spouse, or making the *maniyy* (sexual discharge from the man or the woman) come out of one by, for example, kissing or other physical contact invalidates one's fasting. If, however, one experienced a wet dream or *maniyy* exited from one because of certain thoughts, one's fast is not invalidated.

One's fasting is invalidated by forcing oneself to vomit, either by inserting the finger into the mouth or otherwise. In the case when one forces one to vomit, whether or not one swallows some of one's vomit, one's fast is invalidated and one has to make up that invalidated day of fast. However, the one who vomited involuntarily (without purposely forcing oneself to do so) does not break one's fast as long as one does not swallow any of the vomit or saliva mixed with the *najas*-filthy vomit.

There are different sayings regarding the phlegm or congestion that drips from the nasal passage into the throat. According to *Imam ash-Shafi'iyy*, if the phlegm reached to the part of the throat above where the exit of the letter *ha'* ح is, and the person swallowed it, this would invalidate his fasting. However, according to *Imam Abu Hanifah*, even if the phlegm reaches to the tongue and the person swallows it, his fasting is not invalidated, as long as he does not swallow it after it separates from his mouth.

Finally, the Muslim must abstain at all times from committing apostasy, i.e., committing any type of blasphemy which takes him out of *Islam*.

Apostasy invalidates Fasting, even if one returns to *Islam* immediately afterwards. After returning to *Islam*, One must abstain from eating and other

invalidators of Fasting during the whole day. Moreover, One must make up the invalidated day(s) of Fasting after *Ramadan*.

E. Conditions of Valid Fasting

Among the conditions for the validity of one's fasting is that the person does not become insane, not even for a moment, during the fasting day. If a person loses his sanity during the day or during part of the day, even for a moment, then his fasting will be invalidated. In addition to this, one's fasting is invalid if one loses consciousness during the entire fasting day, that is, from the dawn until sunset. However, if one loses consciousness for only part of the day, this does not invalidate the fast. On the other hand, sleeping does not invalidate the fast, even if one slept all day long.

F. Days of Unlawful Fasting

It is invalid to fast the day of the feast of *Fiṭr* (*ʿĪd-ul- Fiṭr*), the day of the Feast of *Adha* (*ʿĪd-ul-ʿAdha*) and the three (*Tashriq*) days after the day of *Adha*. It is also invalid to fast the last half of *Shaʿban* and the Day of Doubt, except if one joins the fasting of these with those before them or if one is fasting for an expiation (*kaffarah*), make up (*qada*), vow (*nadhr*), or habitual consistent practice (*wird*), like the one who usually fasts Mondays and Thursdays.

G. Qiyam of Ramadan (Tarawih) Prayer

In the month of *Ramadan*, it is recommended every night to perform an optional prayer after the *ʿIsha*' prayer. It is called the *Qiyam* of *Ramadan* prayer. Some call it also the *Tarawih* prayer. The Messenger of *Allah* ﷺ said:

which means: "The prayer at night is (preferrably) two rakʿahs at a time. If one fears the dawn will break, let one pray one rakʿah of witr." (*al-Bukhariyy, Muslim*) The Messenger of *Allah* ﷺ also said:

which means: "Pray the *witr* after praying five, seven, nine, eleven, or more." (*Ibn Hibban, Ibnul-Mundhir, al-Hakim*)

These two *hadiths* signify that the *Muslim* may pray after *ʿIsha*' as many *rakʿahs* as desired, without specifying a maximum number. Lady *A'ishah* said:

which means: "The Messenger of *Allah* did not pray at night more than eleven *rak'ahs* in *Ramadan* or otherwise." This *hadith* only tells what Lady *A'ishah* witnessed the Prophet do. It does not mean that one cannot pray more than eleven *rak'ahs*. This is substantiated by the *hadith* of *Imam Aliyy* narrated by *Hafidh al-Khila'iyy* that the Prophet prayed sixteen *rak'ahs* at night. *Hafidh al-Iraqiyy* said that its chain is good.

It became conventional among many to label the twenty *rak'ahs* followed by the three *witr rak'ahs* the *Tarawih* prayer. As for the *Qiyam* of *Ramadan*, *Imam ash-Shafi'iyy* said: "There is no limit for the number of *rak'ahs* the *Qiyam* of *Ramadan* prayer has." Hence, let the intention in the heart be: "I now pray the *Qiyam* of *Ramadan* prayer". It is also good to pray it in congregation. The practice in the Islamic countries is to recite the thirty *Juz's* of the *Qur'an* in the congregational *Qiyam* of *Ramadan* prayer, at the rate of one *Juz'* every night.

H. Zakah of Fitrah

The Zakah of Fitrah is due on every Muslim who is alive part of *Ramadan* and part of *Shawwal* (the month after *Ramadan*.) The due Zakah for each is a "sa'" or four times the fill of a pair of average-sized hands cupped together with the most common staple food of one's area. It is an obligation upon the Muslim to pay the due Zakah for one and one's Muslim dependants if on the day of the Feast of Fitrah (*Id-ul-Fitrah*) and the night after it he has enough to meet one's debts, clothing, lodging, and sustenance, and the sustenance of those whom one must support.

The man must pay the Zakah of Fitrah for his wife, non-pubescent children, slaves, and poor Muslim parents. He may not pay for his pubescent children or solvent parents without their permission. It is permissible to pay the Fitrah Zakah any time during *Ramadan*, even on the first night. However, it is recommended to pay it during the day of the Feast and before the *Id* Prayer, because this mends the hearts of the poor people before the Prayer. It is prohibited to delay paying the Fitrah Zakah until after the sunset of the day of the Feast without an excuse.

I. Recipients of Zakah:

For all types of Zakah, the intention is obligatory upon setting one's Zakah portion aside. Zakah must be paid to the eight categories of Muslims deserving of Zakah as mentioned explicitly in the *Qur'an* (*at-Tawbah*, 61):

1. Those (who are poor) who earn less than half their basic needs (*al-fuqara'*);
2. Those (who are poor) who earn half, but less than what meets all their basic needs (*al-masakin*);
3. The Zakah workers who are assigned by the caliph (*al-[^]amiluna [^]alayha*);
4. The new converts to *Islam* whose hearts are to be reconciled (*al-mu'allafatu qulubuhum*);
5. The slaves who are short in satisfying their contract for purchasing their freedom from their owners (*ar-riqab*);
6. Those who are unable to pay their debts (*al-gharimun*);
7. The volunteer fighters (*fi sabilillah*);
8. The travelers who do not have enough to enable them to reach their destination (*ibn-us-sabil*).

It is neither permissible nor valid to pay Zakah to other than those eight types of Muslims specifically mentioned above. That is why it is not valid to pay Zakah to any charitable project, hospital, or the like to meet this obligation.

J. Recommended Deeds While Fasting

It is recommended (*sunnah*) to break one's fast as soon as one is sure the *maghrib* (sunset) has begun. It is good to break one's fast by eating dates, and if not available, then by drinking water. It is good to say the following statement upon breaking one's fast:

which means: <<O Allah, for Your sake I fasted, and with Your sustenance I broke my fast.>> It was narrated from *Abu Dawud* that the Prophet ﷺ used to say this supplication upon breaking his fast. It is also good to delay the *sahur* meal until a time close to the dawn, but to stop eating before the dawn.

Refraining from backbiting, cursing a *Muslim*, and other sins, is more emphasized while fasting. In committing some sins, the reward of one's fasting might be lessened or lost. If someone curses another, let the one cursed abstain from responding with a similar curse. Instead, let him say, "I am fasting. I am fasting."

Paying the optional charity to the poor; reciting the *Qur'an*; staying in the mosque with the intention of *i'tikaf*, especially during the last ten days of *Ramadan*; praying the *Tarawih* prayer; and inviting others to break their fast on food which you provide are all rewardable acts.

The month of *Ramadan* is a great opportunity for one to gain a great deal of reward. Reward is earned by performing this obligation in worship and obedience to *Allah*, and by performing many the recommended (*sunnah*) deeds. Let us not waste our time during this blessed month.

definite that the night of Qadr is the night of the twenty seventh or twenty-ninth, but most likely it is.

The Messenger of Allah said:

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It means: "Seek it in the last ten nights of Ramadan." This is because it is most likely in the last ten nights. This does not exclude it being in other than those last ten nights. It might be on the first, second, or other nights. The wisdom of concealing it is that in order to catch it, people need be diligent in worship throughout all the nights of Ramadan. The Qur'an was not revealed according to the present order. After twenty-three years of Revelation, the Qur'an was revealed in total to the Prophet ﷺ. He taught his Companions to recite it in the order which has been known to Muslims since the time of the Prophet, sallallahu ^alayhi wa sallam. Reciting the parts of the Qur'an in this order was not an ijihad from the Companions, but mere execution and following of the Prophet's orders.

2. ﴿ ﴾

It means: "[O Muhammad,] what do you know about the Night of Qadr!" This shows it has a great status.

3. ﴿ ﴾

It means: "Doing good deeds on the Night of Qadr is better than doing them in one thousand months (that do not have that night)". One thousand months is approximately 83 years. The Night of Qadr has signs. Among its signs are seeing a bright light that Allah creates, other than the light of the sun, the moon, and electricity. Others are seeing the trees making sujud, or the sun rising in the morning with soft light, or hearing the voices of the angels and shaking hands with them, or seeing them in their original form with many wings. Seeing some of those signs indicates seeing it. Seeing it in a dream indicates good things. However, it is not as good as seeing it while awake. Whoever does not see it in the dream or while awake, but is diligent in praying and obedience on that night shall be granted, from its great blessing, the reward of worshipping Allah on that night. The Prophet said:

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It means: "Whoever prays on the Night of Qadr with faith and seeking reward from Allah, then his old, small sins will be forgiven." To get this reward one prays, and the number of rakahs could be a few or many. It is better to recite for a long time while standing in Salah than to make long sujud with little

reciting. Making *du^a'* at the moment of seeing it is a sign of the *du^a'* being fulfilled. Many Muslims have been blessed with obtaining what they asked on that night.

4. ﴿



It means: "On that night, *Jibril* and the angels come down with what *Allah* ordered and willed to happen for the next year, such as the givings of the people and how long they will live." A *hadith* is related about the Messenger of *Allah* saying:

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It means: "On the Night of *Qadr*, *Jibril* comes down with a group of angels. They make supplication for and say *salam* to every one who is standing in prayer or sitting mentioning *Allah*. They keep on descending from sunset until dawn (*Fajr*) appears.

5. ﴿



It means: "This night has peace, goodness, and blessing upon the righteous and obedient Muslims." Moreover, Satan cannot do any evil or harm. This safety lasts until *Fajr*.

Lady *A'ishah* asked the Prophet what *du^a'* (supplication) she should say if she knew it was the Night of *Qadr*. He told her to say:

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It means: "O *Allah* You are the One Who pardons and loves to pardon. I ask You to pardon me." (*at-Tirmidhiyy*). The Prophet's most frequent *du^a'* in *Ramadan* and otherwise was:

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It means: "O our Lord, give us good things in this world and good things in the Hereafter, and protect us from the torture of Hellfire."⁽³⁾

***Allah* knows best.**

³ The good things in this life include good health and deeds, knowledge, and righteous wife and children. The good things in the Hereafter include Paradise and being saved of the horrors of the Day of Judgement.