

WHO MUST FAST

Ramadhan is the month in which was sent down the Quran, as a guide to mankind, and as clear signs for guidance and judgement (between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it fasting. But if any one is ill or on a journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance you shall be grateful. (Holy Quran 2:185)

(A. Yousuf Ali's translation, revised)

Fasting is obligatory on every sane, adult, healthy Muslim male and female. The female must not be undergoing menstruation or post-childbirth bleeding (these days should be made up after Ramadhan). It is not required, nor is there compensation due, for the insane or pre-adolescent children. Those who are sick or traveling are allowed to break their fasts during Ramadhan but must make up day for day at a later time, not necessarily consecutively. Those who are elderly and/or chronically ill, or perform harsh labor as the only means of supporting themselves, or pregnant or nursing mothers, are not required to fast but are obligated to feed one poor person for each day not fasted.

“No servant fasts on a day in the path of Allah except that Allah removes the hell-fire a distance of seventy years travelling further away from his face.”

THE MANNERS

- (a) **The pre-dawn meal.** “The pre-dawn meal is blessed, so do not neglect it even if only take a sip of water.” It is sunnah to have it as close to the time of *fajr* as possible. If one is in doubt whether or not *fajr* has begun, one may continue to eat until it is certain.
- (b) **Hastening in breaking the fast.** “The people will always be with the good as long as they hasten in breaking the fast.” “If one of you is fasting, he should break his fast with dates. If dates are not available, then with water, for water is purifying.” “If the food is already presented, eat before the *maghrib* prayer and do not eat your meals in haste.
- (c) **Supplications when breaking the fast.** ‘Allah for You I have fasted, and in You I believe, and upon you I rely, and with your provisions I break my fast.’ *Allahumma laka sumt, wa bika amant, wa alaika tawaqqalt, wa birizqika aftart.*
- (d) **Refraining from any actions that do not benefit fasting.** “Perhaps a fasting person will get nothing from his fast save hunger, and perhaps one who stands to pray at night will get nothing from his standing except sleeplessness.”
- (e) **Using the siwak or tooth stick.** “I saw the Prophet (pbuh) cleaning his teeth with the siwak while he was fasting so many times I couldn't count.”
- (f) **Being generous and studying Qur'an.** “The Prophet (pbuh) was the most generous of people, but he would be his most generous during Ramadhan when he would meet with [the angel] Gabriel. he would meet with him every night and recite the Qur'an. When Gabriel met him, he would be more generous than a fast wind.
- (g) **Striving to perform as many acts of worship as possible during the last ten days of Ramadhan.** “[The Prophet (pbuh)] would strive [to do acts of worship] during the last ten days of Ramadhan more than he would at any other time.”

THE VIRTUES

Abu Hurayrah (RA) reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, saying: “Allah said: ‘Every action of the son of Adam is for him except fasting, for that is solely for Me. I give the reward for it.’ The fast is a shield. If one is fasting, he should not use foul language, raise his voice, or behave foolishly. If someone reviles him or fights with him he should say, ‘I am fasting,’ twice. By the One in whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, the [bad] breath of the one who is fasting is better in the sight of Allah on the day of Resurrection than the smell of musk. The one who is fasting is happy at two times: when he breaks his fast he is happy with it and when he meets his Lord he will be happy that he has fasted. [Allah says about the fasting person] He leaves his food, drink, and desire for My sake. The fast is for me; I will give the reward for it, and for every good deed, [he will receive] ten similar to it.

(Bukhari and Muslim)

Sahl ibn Sad (RA) reported that the Prophet (SAAWS) said: “There is a gate to Paradise that is called ar-Rayyan; on the Day of Resurrection it will say, Where are those who fasted? When the last one has passed through the gate, it will be locked.” This is related by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Abu Hurayrah (RA) reported that the Prophet (SAAWS) said: “The blessed month (of Ramadhan) has come to you. Allah has made fasting during it obligatory upon you. During it gates to Paradise are opened and the gates to Hellfire are locked, and the devils are chained. There is night (during this month) which is better than a thousand months. Whoever is deprived of its good is really deprived (of something great).” This is related by Ahmad, an –Nasai and al-Baihaqi.

ACTS PERMISSIBLE WHILE FASTING

- (a) Pouring water over oneself or submersing oneself in water.
- (b) Applying *kohl* or eye drops or anything else to the eyes, even if some taste is felt.
- (c) Kissing for one who has the ability to control oneself, and if it is done in such a way as to not excite one's desire.
- (d) Any type of intravenous (IV) or through-the-skin injection, regardless of medicinal or nutritional purposes, even if it will reach the stomach.
- (e) Cupping or vivisection to drain blood.
- (f) Rinsing the mouth and nose, although some scholars consider nose drops to break the fast.
- (g) Unavoidable swallowing, e.g. saliva, dust, sifting flour, etc., as well as smelling perfume or incense, using lotions, etc.
- (h) Eating, drinking, and performing sexual intercourse until *fajr*.
- (i) It is permissible to be in a state of *junub* (after having sex) even after *fajr* (i.e., it is not required to perform *ghusl* before the *adhan* for *fajr*.)
- (j) If the blood of a menstruating women or one with post-childbirth bleeding stops during the night, she can delay *ghusl* until the morning and still fast, but must perform *ghusl* before the morning prayer.

ACTS THAT VOID THE FAST

The following acts void the fast and require the day to be made up later:

- (a) Intentional eating and drinking. Accidental eating or drinking neither voids the fast nor requires a day to be made up. "Whoever forgets he is fasting and eats or drinks, is to complete his fast, as it was Allah who fed him and gave him something to drink.
- (b) Intentional vomiting.
- (c) Menstruation or post-childbirth bleeding.
- (d) Ejaculation of sperm due to kissing, hugging or masturbation. Unintentional dreams do not void the fast.
- (e) If one has the intention, while he is fasting, to break the fast, even if he does not actually eat anything (i.e., breaking it by intention.
- (f) Having sexual intercourse during the day. This also requires expiation in the form of: (1) freeing a slave, or (2) fasting two consecutive months, or (3) feeding sixty poor people. Note that the expiation must be done in order of ability. If and only if (1) cannot be performed, then (2) must be performed, etc.

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FASTING IN RAMADHAN

'O! You believers the fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you in order that you may learn self-restraint.'

2:v183