

Fasting: Shield from Hell-Fire!

From the Code of the Righteous series

Please Note: The bold-font paragraphs in these notes are a translation of the book being explained, Manhajus-slaikien, by Sh. Abdurahman as-Sa'dee. The rest of the notes in the different font are an explanation of that book prepared by Aslam Hussain. Last revised: 20th Oct, 2003

Praise is for Allah for prescribing on us the fast, a worship so beneficial to us as individuals and a society that the Messenger of Allah (S) referred to it as a shield.

It reforms the individual and the community and shields them from the ill effects of immoral behaviour here in this life and from the punishment of Hell-fire in the Hereafter.

The purpose of fasting and how it works

Fasting in Arabic is sawm or siyam. It means imsaak which is to refrain. So, what is the purpose of refraining from fasting from dawn till dusk?

The purpose of fasting is mentioned in the verse of the Quran, **“O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed on you as it was prescribed on those before you so you develop Taqwa (God-consciousness, piety).”** [Surah Baqarah]

So the main purpose of fasting is to develop taqwa. Taqwa is to evade something and shield oneself from something by taking appropriate measures. Thus the purpose of fasting is to develop taqwa and strengthen the ability and resolve to shield oneself from the punishment for sins due to Allah's displeasure from them and due to the harm of sins on the individual and the whole society. Also, the reward for this exercise, fasting, is itself a shield from hell-fire as it wipes out some sins. Furthermore, a person learns the plight of the poor as he lives their pain for a few hours in the day every day this month and naturally will be more inclined to help them with the sustenance that Allah has bestowed on him. Also, he would be more appreciative of Allah for providing him with that which He withheld from so many others, thus he would look for means to be thankful to Allah for that by using it in ways that are fruitful. All these further increase the reward for good deeds of the person and shield him from hell-fire all the more.

Essentially a person who fasts refrains from the fundamental human instincts – food, water and sex – from dawn till the sunset. It takes effort to ignore the instinctive call. This keeps the person aware throughout the day as to why and for Whom he is refraining from these needs that he is craving for instinctively for those few hours day

after day during that month. Not only does he learn self-control but a consciousness for Whom it is being done for is developed - actions as well as intentions are enhanced. This essentially is what taqwa is, the primary goal of fasting as mentioned in the verse in the Quran.

Other rewards of fasting...

The need for taqwa and its benefits for everyone are so many and so important that it is no wonder that Allah prescribed fasting on Muslims for a whole month and promised almost infinite reward from the numerous ways during Ramadan.

The Messenger of Allah (S) said, **‘Allah azza wa jall said, “Every action of the son of Adam is for himself except for fasting; for it is for me and I reward it for it”.’** This hadith was agreed upon by Bukhari and Muslim. In another narration in Muslim, he (S) said, **‘every action of the son of Adam is multiplied (in reward) – one good deed is (rewarded with) the like of ten to seven hundred times of those similar to it. Allah, the Exalted, said, “Except for fasting, it is for me and I reward it for it; he leaves his desires and food for me!”** For a fasting person are two joys: joy when he finishes his fast and joy when he meets his Lord. Indeed the smell of his mouth (while fasting) is better with Allah than the fragrance of Musk (the best of the fragrances).’

And to facilitate fasting during the month of Ramadan, the Prophet (S) informed of ways Allah helps a fasting person during the month. He (S) said, **“When Ramadan arrives, the doors of Paradise are opened, the doors of Hell-Fire are closed and the Satans are chained.”** This was collected by Bukhari and Muslim.

Having closed the doors to evil whisperings from the big satans, it is up to the person to excel in doing the good deeds and gain the maximum benefit from this blessed month, **“The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Quran, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong). So whoever of you sights (the crescent on the first night of) the month (of Ramadan) let him fast it.”** [Surah Baqarah: 185]

Some ways to make the most from this Ramadan

- Remember that the doors to Paradise are opened for you, the doors to hell-fire are closed and the satans are chained as in the hadith mentioned above; so it is up to you to concentrate fully on doing as many good deeds as you can in Ramadan.
- No one is seeing you keep your fast intact except Allah and therefore He is going to reward you even endlessly, so take every opportunity to do something that pleases only Allah while fasting even if it is small, the reward in this month for the same action can be immense – more than even seven hundred times! – as mentioned in the hadith above.
- Whenever you feel the hunger or the thirst remember that it is for Allah alone you are doing this for as none else can see you sneaking a drink or a snack, remember the same even outside Ramadan when you try to defeat your temptation to do something wrong then. This builds taqwa and self-control.
- Since the purpose of fasting is to build self-control for Allah, do not overdo at the time of Iftar as though there is no tomorrow. Remember the sunnah of the Prophet (S) to break the fast with a few dates or water only and then pray maghrib (hadith collected in sunan Abu Dawud), this allows the stomach to expand slowly after fasting and it also allows the person to gradually move out of the fast. It also keeps the person active to pray the night prayers and get its tremendous reward.
- Invite others for Iftar for you also share the reward then of the fast of those who you provide iftar for.
- But do not waste time during the day preparing a big feast for many guests at Iftar but also spend as much time as possible to recite Quran during the day and reflect on its meanings, do many adhkar to remember Allah and pray extra prayers as these are the recommended activities during the day in Ramadan.
- Be the most generous during Ramadan due to the immense reward for any good therein and also because the Prophet (S) used to be as Ibn Abbas (r) reported, **“The Messenger of Allah (S) was the nicest of the people, and the nicest he was of all the times was in Ramadan when Jibreel used to meet him. Jibreel used to meet him every night in Ramadan and have him to revise (and study) Quran; and so the Messenger of Allah (S) when Jibreel alihisalam would meet him was the nicer than the pleasant breeze.”** This was collected in Sahih Bukhari and Muslim.
- The sunnah is to revise the Quran during Ramadan more than at other times and study it and reflect on its meanings. Scholars have said that reciting Quran and reflecting on its message is the best of all dhikr for Ramadan and outside it. Even some of the greatest of the early scholars used to stop their classes in Ramadan and recite Quran even more therein.
- As one preoccupies himself with generosity and reciting Quran, he ought to distance himself even more from lying, slander, ignorant behaviour as the Prophet (S) said, **“Whoever did not leave the fabricated sayings (or lies);**

acting on them and ignorance (jahl), Allah has no need for him leaving his food and drink.” This was collected by Bukhari.

- Do sahur for as the Prophet (S) said, **“Do sahur for sahur is barakah (blessing).”** A little food at sahur before commencing the fast at dawn and iftar when completing it at sunset keep the fast in moderation, so it is not an exercise in torture and starvation rather one in moderation for a period long enough to make a person feel the hunger and thirst enough to build self control and consciousness of Allah. That is a reason why the Prophet (S) also said, **“People will not seize to be well as long as they hasten to do fitr (break the fast upon its completion).”**
- Moderation in food at iftar and activity during the day enables the person to be active for one of the most important deeds in Ramadan, taraweeh. As the Prophet (S) said, **“whoever stood up (to pray) in Ramadan with faith (Iman) and self scrutiny to look forward to the reward (ihtisaab), all his previous sins are forgiven.”** Bukhari and Muslim collected it. The Prophet and the many companions used to pray the night prayer but in Ramadan they would all gather to offer it together in congregation as done briefly by the Prophet (S) in his lifetime. This strengthens everyone’s spirit at nights in mosques around the city.
- Searching for the lialtul-qadr (the night of decree) in the last ten nights of Ramadan and worshipping therein is equivalent to the worship in a thousand months as in Surah al-qadr. Also, in the hadith, **“Whoever stood up (and prayed) in lailatul-qadr with iman and ihtisab will have his previous sins forgiven.”** This is also in Bukhari and Muslim.
- One of the best ways to ensure not missing the lailatul-qadr is to follow the sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (S) and do I’tikaf in the masjid during the last ten days and nights of Ramadan. This is one of the best means to strengthen one’s iman, recite Quran, reflect on it, and get tremendous reward especially from lailatul-Qadr in it.

The Rules and Regulations of Fasting in Ramadan

The basis for this is the saying of Allah, the Exalted, "O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed on you as it was prescribed on those before you so you develop Taqwa (God-consciousness, piety)." [Surah Baqarah: 183 and these verses continue till 187]

Conditions for fasting to be obligatory

Fasting of Ramadan is compulsory on every conscious, sane, post-puberty Muslim who is able to fast.

The following hadith shows that any person in the following three situations is pardoned from the obligations of Sharia. Aisha (r) reported from the Messenger of Allah (S) that he said, **"The pen has been raised from three: from the one sleeping until he wakes up, from an insane person until he comes out of it and from a child until he reaches puberty."** Albani and others classed it as authentic and it is a well known hadith.

So a person who was overtaken by sleep at the time for an act of worship such as a prayer and the time commences and finishes while he is asleep, such a person is not held blameworthy and merely prays when he wakes up. This however doesn't apply to fasting as it is merely refraining from things that he refrains from even while asleep. The child is not obliged to fast till he reaches puberty. However, a young child who has reached an age (tamyeez) where he can distinguish between right and wrong, valid and invalid etc, such a child may fast and it is a supererogatory deed that is rewarded. A person, who has lost sanity, doesn't fast as he doesn't realise any thing to make an intention while insane.

A person who is sick or traveling and thus unable to fast is also excused from fasting until he is over that. Allah says in the Quran, its translation reads, **"Whoever was sick or traveling, (he makes up the) number from other days."** [Surah Baqarah] Also, an aged person who is unable to fast is excused as seen shortly from saying of Ibn Abbas and practice of Anas ibn Malik (r).

How is the beginning of Ramadan known?

The obligation starts with the sighting of the moon of the month of Ramadan or by the passing of thirty days of the month of Sha'baan. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) said, "If you (plural form of verb) see it, fast; and if you see it, break (at the end of the month of Ramadan). If it was overcast, estimate it." This hadith was agreed upon its authenticity by Bukhari and Muslim. And in a narration of this hadith the wording is, "...estimate for it thirty." And in another wording, "...complete the number of Sha'abaan as thirty." This was collected in Sahih Bukhari. Fasting is started by the sighting of the crescent (hilal = first day crescent) by a person of sound integrity ('Adl). As for the remaining of the months, it is not accepted except from two such people of sound integrity.

Fasting for the month of Ramadan begins by sighting the moon of the first day of Ramadan as in this verse, **"The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Quran, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong). So whoever of you sights (the crescent on the first night of) the month (of Ramadan) let him fast it."** [Surah Baqarah: 185]

So, fasting for the month of Ramadan begins by one of two ways:

1. When the crescent for the first day of Ramadan is sighted. An individual who is trustworthy and reliable may sight it and informs the leader of the Muslims who declares the beginning of the month. This is as in the following hadith, **'Ibn Umar reported that people tried to sight the crescent. I informed the Prophet (S) that I saw it. So he fasted and ordered the people to fast it.'** This was collected by Abu Dawud and others. Hakim, Dha'habi and Albani said it is authentic.

We note from this hadith that the sunnah is for the leader of the Muslims to declare the beginning and end of the month's fasting and the individuals follow the declaration of the leader of the Muslims in that place and not their own.

However, if a person sighted the moon and the leader did not find him reliable and did not accept it, then the individual himself fasts that day as he has seen it and the rest of the people follow the leader and wait. If it was at the end of the month for Eid, then the individual refrains from fasting that day if he is convinced he saw it (according to the opinion of some scholars) and does the eid the following day along with the rest of the Muslims and their Leader.

The Prophet (S) said in a hadith, **“...so if two bore witness, fast (you all) and break.”** This was collected by Nasa’ee and others and Albani said it is authentic. In some narrations there is an addition of the two people, **“two Muslims...”** and in some it says, **“two trustworthy reliable...”** The scholars differed in the way they combined between this hadith mentioning two people and the hadith of Ibn Umar with just one person. Some said this is for all instances while Ibn Umar’s is just for the beginning of Ramadan as Sh Sa’di mentioned above. Others said, the two is the preferred but if one is reliable of high degree then it will do. And there are other sayings on this matter.

2. The second way is when the sighting of the moon is not possible due to the sky being overcast etc; in that case the people assume the current lunar month is full thirty days and then fast the following day. This is seen in the narration mentioned by Sh Sa’di above, **“...complete the number of Sha’abaa as thirty.”** In fact, if in doubt due to the sky being overcast etc, the Muslims have been directed not to fast that day at all assuming it is Ramadan as in this hadith with the saying of Ammar ibn Yasir (r), **“Whoever fasted the day that is doubted upon has indeed disobeyed Abul-Qasim (i.e. Muhammad (S)).”** Imam Bukhari mentioned this as a Mu’allaq narration, and Abu Dawud, Nasa’ee, Tirmidhi etc and Tirmidhi said it is Hasan Sahih and others also said it is authentic.

When is the intention made for fasting?

It is compulsory to have the intention to fast an obligatory fast from the night. As for the supererogatory fast, it is permissible with an intention (for it) made during the day.

We learn that it is compulsory to have an intention for an obligatory fast from the following hadith of Hafsa (r) from the Prophet (S), **“Whoever did not gather the fast from the night, there is no fast for him.”** This was collected by Abu Dawud, Daraqutni and others and Albani said it is authentic. In another narration in Ibn Majah and Daraqutni, **“There is no fast for the one who did not oblige it from the night.”** This is an authentic narration too.

But in another hadith we note Aisha (r) said, **“The Prophet (S) entered upon me one day. He said, “Do you have anything.” We said, “No.” He said, “In that case I am fasting.” Then he came to us on another day, we said, “We have been given a gift of Hais.” So he said, “Show it to me, I had been fasting (this morning).” And he ate it.’** This was collected in sahih Muslim. This hadith shows that it is permissible to commence a nafl fast from during the morning as long as the person hadn’t eaten before that. It also shows that there is no blame on breaking a supererogatory fast.

Valid reasons for leaving fasting of Ramadan to another day
And means to expiate and make up for broken fasts

A sick person who will be harmed by fasting and a traveler may break the fast or keep it. A menstruating woman and one in post-childbirth bleeding are prohibited from fasting and it is incumbent on them to make up for it. A pregnant woman and a breast-feeding one if they fear for their child break the fast and make up for it and feed a poor person for each day. A person who is incapable of fasting due to old age or sickness that is not expected to be cured, such people feed a poor person for each day.

A person who breaks on a day only has to make up that fast by fasting another day (Qadaa) if the fast was broken with eating, drinking, inducing vomiting (deliberately as opposed to unwillingly), blood-letting (hijaamah), ejaculation from foreplay etc. But if a person broke the fast due to a sexual intercourse, then he makes up for that day (Qadaa) and (gives major kaffarah or expiation which is that he) frees a slave. But if he could not find that, he fasts for two consecutive months. If he could not do that, he feeds sixty poor people.

Qada, feeding poor or kaffarah

People, who cannot fast due to a reason considered to be valid in Shariah, leave the fast for that day in Ramadan. Depending on the reason for not fasting, a person is either required to make it up on another day later on (called Qada in Arabic), feed a poor person (it'aam) or to expiate for the broken fast with the major expiation.

Things that break the Fast

Firstly, the major expiation, called Kaffarah udh'maa in Arabic, is only obligatory on someone who broke the fast on a day in Ramadan by sexual intercourse and it is as described above to free a slave, if unable to do that then fast two consecutive months and if unable to do that then to feed sixty poor people.

One hadith that shows this requirement is the following one narrated by **Abu Hurairah (r)**. He said, **While we were seated with the Prophet (S), a man came and said, "O Messenger of Allah, I am destroyed!" He said, "What is it?" He said, "I (got) onto my wife while I was fasting."** So the Messenger of Allah (S)

said, “Do you find a slave to free?” He said, “No.” He said, “Then can you fast for two consecutive months?” He said, “No.” He said, “Do you find (ability to) feed sixty poor people?” He said, “No.” So he was silent. While we were on that, a container of dates was brought to the Prophet (S). He said, “Where is the questioner? Take this and spend it in charity.” The man said, “On someone poorer than me, O Messenger of Allah? By Allah there is none between the two sides of the volcanic plains poorer than the people of my house.” The Prophet (S) laughed until his molars showed. Then he said, “Feed it to your family.” This was collected by Bukhari and Muslim and others.

In some narrations in other compilations of Hadith, there is an addition that the Prophet (S), **“ordered him to fast another day in its place.”** These chains have weakness in them despite their number and Ibn Taimiyah said that it is not authentic but as Ibn Hajar pointed out, “with the combination of all these chains it is known that this addition (even though not authentic) has a basis,” i.e. the occurrence of this addition (to fast another day also) has a basis and is not fictitious even though it is not accurate and authentic to the level of the rest of the incident that is in Bukhari and Muslim. See Irwaa al-ghalil.

Secondly, if a person breaks fast by merely ejaculating but without a sexual intercourse, then that person is required to still refrain from eating and drinking etc like rest of the fasting people around him and then to do a Qada and make up for that missed day by fasting on another day. The scholars mentioned that the difference between a sexual intercourse (which necessitates Qada and kaffarah) and something short of it (which necessitates a Qada only) is the private part of the male being inserted into the vagina of a female even if it is by a little. This is regardless of the presence of ejaculation of semen or an orgasm; so long as it entered then it is a sexual intercourse and it breaks the fast and necessitates a Qada and kaffarah udh'maa.

Thirdly, a fast is broken by eating or drinking deliberately any time from its beginning at the beginning of the time of Fajr till its end at the beginning of the time for Maghrib prayer and such a person has to make up the fast broken by fasting on another day (Qada). We learn this from many texts from Quran and Sunnah. From the Quran, **“And eat and drink until the white thread becomes clear (Fajr light appearing in the sky) from the black thread of dawn; then complete the fast till the night.”** [Surah Baqarah] From the sunnah, **“Whoever forgot while he was fasting and ate or drank let him complete his fast for verily it is only Allah Who fed him (with food) and drink.”** Agreed Upon. Firstly this hadith shows that whoever ate or drank forgetfully, it doesn't break his fast. Secondly, it also shows from the understanding of its message that whoever did so deliberately breaks his fast.

Fourth, a person who is vomits being overtaken by it, his fast is broken due to the hadith, **“Whoever is overtaken by vomit has no Qada (making up) due on him**

and whoever induces it deliberately let him make it up (do qada).” This was collected by Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi from Abu Hurairah and is Sahih hadith.

Bleeding doesn't break fast...

Scholars differed about a fast breaking from excessive bleeding. Some said it breaks the fast due to an incident. The Prophet (S) was walking by and saw a person cupping (called hijamah in Arabic, blood-letting for medicinal purposes) another one and he said about them, **“The one doing the cupping (hijamah) and the one done on have both broken the fast.”** This was narrated by many companions, collected by Abu Dawud, Nasa'ee, ibn Majah and others and Albani and others said it is authentic. Other scholars said this was abrogated and we learn this from the saying of Anas ibn Malik, the companion, **“The first that hijamah was disliked for a fasting person was when Jafar ibn Abi Talib did hijamah while fasting. The Prophet (S) passed by him and said, “These two have broken their fast.” Then the Prophet (S) made a concession afterwards for hijamah of a fasting person; and Anas used to have hijamah done on him while he was fasting.”** This was collected by Daruqutni and Baihaqi and both said the narrators are trustworthy and Albani classed it as authentic. And also, **Ibn Abbas reported that the Prophet (S) had cupping (hijamah) done on him while fasting.”** This was collected by Bukhari, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi and others.

Things that are disliked but do not break the fast of a fasting person **And some things that is thought to be disliked but are not**

1. Things that are **disliked** for a fasting person are overdoing the rinsing of mouth while doing wudu due to the authentic hadith, **“...And exaggerate in rinsing the mouth except if you were fasting...”**
2. Also **disliked** while fasting although it doesn't break the fast is to leave the backbiting, slander, lying and acting on it and other ignorant behaviour for the Prophet (S) said, **“Whoever did not leave lying and acting on it; and ignorance, Allah has no need for him to leave his food and drink.”** Bukhari and others collected this from Abu Hurairah (r). This is forbidden normally but it is strongly forbidden while fasting as it defeats the purpose from fasting which is to build consciousness of Allah and righteousness.
3. Also, it is **disliked** for a person to kiss the spouse while fasting **if** there is a strong chance that he will get carried away and go on to break his fast. **Otherwise, it is not disliked.** Aisha (r) said, **“The Messenger of Allah (S) used to kiss while fasting and to mubasharah (other things short of a sexual intercourse) while fasting; but he was the strongest of you in controlling his desire.”** This was collected by Muslim and others. Also collected in Sahih Muslim is a hadith of **Umar ibn Abu Salamah, he asked the**

Messenger of Allah (S) does a fasting person kiss? He said, “Ask this – he meant Um Salamah the wife of the Prophet (S)”. She informed him that he does that. He said, “O Messenger of Allah (S), Allah has forgiven you your previous and future sins.” The Messenger of Allah (S) said to him, “By Allah I am the most in Taqwa from amongst you all of Allah (i.e. avoiding sins that displease Allah) and most fearing amongst you all of Him.”

4. Also, it is **not disliked** for a fasting person to shower due to severe heat while fasting. This is learnt from the hadith wherein a companion of the Prophet (S) said, “**I saw the Messenger of Allah (S) pour water over his head while fasting due to severe thirst or from heat.**” This was collected in Muwatta of Imam Malik, Musnad of Imam Ahmad, Abu Dawud and Nasa’ee in their sunan and others. Imam Nawawi said it is sahih. Also Abu Bakr al-Khallal collected a narration that **Ibn Abbas and his companions entered a Hammam (place for the public to bathe in) while fasting in the month of Ramadan.**
5. Also, it is **not disliked** for a person to taste some food while fasting as long as it does not enter the throat due to the saying of Ibn Abbas (r), “**There is no problem in him tasting vinegar or something as long as it does not enter the throat while he is fasting.**” Bukhari mentioned this as a mu’allaq narration and ibn abi shaibah mentioned it with a full chain in al-Musannaf and Albani classed it as Hasan.

Who has a valid reason to not fast

And what do they need to do instead

1. A sick person who would be hamed if he fasted is allowed to leave the fast and instead makes it up by fasting on another day outside Ramadan, “**Whoever was sick or traveling, (he makes up the) number from other days.**” [Surah Baqarah]
2. Traveler is also allowed to break or leave the fast in Ramadan due to the verse mentioned above and he is required to make it up on another day (Qada). If a person is traveling and will be weak and harmed if he fasted the day then such a person should not fast. The Prophet (S) saw a crowd around a person who was down and enquired about him and was informed that he was fasting, so he said concerning that, “**The fast while traveling is not from righteousness.**” Agreed Upon. In another incident on the way to conquer Mecca, the Prophet (S) drank water in front of every one and broke his fast as it was becoming difficult for other people, thus by his action he directed the people to break the fast and some did not as they thought they may still fast and it is more rewarding, he said concerning those who did not break despite the directions on

such a journey, **“They are the disobedient, they are the disobedient!”** This is in Sahih Muslim. But if a person is on a journey which is not difficult or he can bear it, such a person may fast as in the following hadith. Hamzah ibn Amr al-aslamiy said, **“O Messenger of Allah I find in myself strength to fast while on a journey is there any blame on me? So the Messenger of Allah (S) said to him, “It is a concession from Allah, so whoever took it is good and whoever liked to fast there is no blame on him.”** This was collected in sahih Muslim and elsewhere.

3. A menstruating woman (haaid) and one in post childbirth bleeding (nifaas) do not fast until the bleeding stops and thus regain their strength and mind. Fasting in the days of bleeding is not accepted. Instead they fast on other days after Ramadan the number of days they missed due to it in Ramadan. Aishah (r) said, **“I used to have to fast from Ramadan but I would not make it up until Sha’aban came (the month preceding Ramadan).”** This was collected in Bukhari and Muslim and Muslim added in some narrations, **“...work from the Messenger of Allah.”** They have till next Ramadan to do it without any blame and if the fast of one Ramadan is delayed beyond another Ramadan then they are required to feed a poor person as well according to many scholars because she was allowed to delay the fast of one Ramadan only until another Ramadan and delaying beyond that while being in health and able is like someone not fasting in the early phase of Islam and having to feed a poor instead. Her leaving the fast in Ramadan is learnt from texts such as the hadith in Bukhari, **Imam Bukhari wrote, ‘Chapter of a menstruating woman leaving the fast’ and then mentioned a long hadith from Abu Saeed Khudri, part of which has the saying of the Prophet, “Doesn’t one of you if she menstruates she does not pray nor fast?” The companions replied, “Yes.”** Also in another hadith, a person came and asked Aisha (r) why is it that a menstruating woman makes up the missed fasts but doesn’t make up the missed prayers, so she reprimanded her questioning something in that manner and said, **“Are you one from Haruriyah?”**
4. A breast-feeding mother and a pregnant woman may break or leave their fast in Ramadan if they fear for their own health or that of the baby. Many scholars said that if she fears for her health and leaves a fast then she does Qada like a sick person or a traveling one excused in the verse of the Quran as mentioned earlier. But if she leaves the fast not out of fear of her own health but that of her baby only then they said she makes up the fast and does qada for having left a day of compulsory fast in Ramadan like anyone else and in addition to that she feeds a poor person too just as an aged person who leaves the fast or like the person in the early phase of Islam who was allowed to leave fast even if he was in good health but had to feed a poor person, so the scholars said likewise this woman too despite her good health left the fast so feeds a poor person too

in addition to qada. A few other scholars said she only feeds a poor person. There are other sayings besides these two and many hold the first opinion.

5. An old person who is too weak to fast or a sick person with an illness that is not expected to cease and fasting would harm him, these two can leave the fast and instead feed for each day they leave in Ramadan a poor person. This is based on practice of Anas ibn Malik (r) when he grew old, he would gather together thirty poor people and feed them for the whole month he misses. And Ibn Abbas (r) said about the verse in the Quran, **“And on those who have the ability for it (fasting) is the (duty to) ransom: food of a poor person.”** [Surah Baqarah] Informing about this verse, Ibn Abbas said, **“It is not abrogated. It is an old man and woman, cannot fast, so they feed in place of each day a poor person.”** This was collected in Sahih Bukhari and elsewhere.

Some hadith concerning fasting and related matters...

The Prophet (s.a.w) said, “Whoever forgot while he was fasting and ate or drank, let him complete his fast for verily it is only Allah Who fed him (with food) and drink.” Agreed Upon. He also said, “People will continue to be in goodness so long as they hasten the breaking of fast (Fitr).” Agreed Upon. He also said, “Do sahur (eating before commencing the fast at dawn) for the Sahur is barakah (blessings and increase in good).” Agreed Upon. He also said, “If one of you finishes his fast (Fitr at maghrib time), let him do it on a date, if he doesn't find that then on water for that is purifying (and pure - Tahur).” This was collected by the five (four sunan and musnad Ahmad). And the Prophet (s.a.w) said, “Whoever did not leave the fabricated sayings (or lies), acting on them and ignorance (jahl), Allah has no need for him leaving his food and drink.” This was collected by Bukhari. He said, “Whoever dies while having to (make up) fasts, his heir (or guardian of inheritance etc, i.e. his son or father etc) fasts on his behalf.” Agreed upon.

Some scholars understood from this last hadith that it is only in case of a fast that a person vowed to do if something happened (Nadhr) and thus made it compulsory on himself, such a fast his wali (inheritor) fasts on his behalf if he dies without fasting that. Otherwise, the fast of Ramadan, no one can fast on his behalf during his lifetime even

if he was sick – unlike Haj or Umra – so no one can fast that on his behalf even when he dies. If a woman died before the next Ramadan came and didn't make up her fast due to menstruation then there is no blame on her as the time was flexible till next Ramadan.

Dua for completing fast at Iftar

At the time of the Iftar, the Prophet (S) would say the dua, **“Dha’haba-dhama’a wabtallitil-urooq wa thabatal-ajru inshallah.”** This means ‘The thirst has gone, the vessels have become wet and the reward has become binding.’ This hadith was collected by Abu Dawud and others and Albani said it is hasan.

Supererogatory Fasts

Given the tremendous reward and benefit from fasting – which is not only for the individual but also the whole community – Islam encourages a person to fast extra fasts even outside Ramadan.

Allah encouraged these fasts by offering reward that is as though a person fasted the whole of his life everyday in it. So, each good deed is rewarded by ten times at least and thirty days of Ramadan is rewarded at least as three hundred days. Then following that up with six more days in the next month adds an equivalent of sixty days and that is the reward for fasting the whole year! Likewise fasting three days every month is rewarded by ten times which is equal to thirty days or that whole month. If this is done month after month it is as though the person fasted the whole year and every year of his life! This reward is not only in the hereafter in Paradise but also this regular fasting keeps reviving and building the self-control and consciousness of Allah (taqwa) for the whole year and thus the person does even more good deeds. So the reward and benefits of supererogatory prayers are countless and its harvest is reaped in this life as well as the eternal one in Paradise.

The Prophet (s.a.w) was asked about the fast of the day of Arafah (9th Dhul-Hijjah - eleventh month of the Islamic Calendar), he said, “It expiates for the last year and the remaining one.” He was asked about the fast of Aashurah (10th of Muharram - 1st month of the Islamic Calendar), he said, “It expiates (the sins of) the last year.” He was asked about the fast of Monday, he said, “That is the day I was born on,

sent (as a Messenger of Allah) or it was revealed to me on it." This was collected by Muslim.

He said, "Whoever fasts Ramadan, then followed it with six (days) from Shawwal (the month after the month of Ramadan), it is like fasting for all time." This was collected by Muslim. Abu Dharr said, "The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) ordered us to fast in every month three days: thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth." This was collected by Nasa'ee and Tirmidhi.

In a hadith, "He forbade the fasting of two days: day of Fitr (eid day after fasting month of Ramadan - 1st of Shawwal) and day of Ad'ha (eid day on 10th Muharram)." Agreed Upon it. And he said, "The days of Tashriq (11th, 12th and 13th of Muharram - last three days of Hajj pilgrimage) are days of eating, drinkin and remembering Allah azza wa jalla." This was collected by Muslim. And he said, "Let none of you fast the day of Friday except if he was to fast a day before or a day after it." Agreed upon it.

Fasting is not for days of Eid such as the two Eids, days of tashriq in Haj and Fridays. This is because the Eid is for celebration which includes eating and drinking and thus fasting is neither appropriate nor permissible on those days.

He said, "Whoever fasted Ramadan with Iman and ihtisaab (expecting and looking forward to the reward for it), his pervious sins are forgiven," and also he said, "Whoever stood up (to pray the night prayer in) Ramadan with Iman and Ihtisaab (scrutinizing oneself by doing it best and thus looking forward to the reward), his previous sins are forgiven." He also said, "Whoever stood up (to pray the night prayer on) the night of Decree (Decree or high stature: laylatul-qadr) with Iman and Ihtisaab (looking forward to the reward), his past sins are forgiven." Agreed upon it.

Taraweeh Prayers

These are performed in the night of Ramadan and in fact are the night prayers (or tahajjud) done in any other night. But the reward for these in Ramadan with Iman and looking forward to the reward by doing it properly is the forgiveness of all previous sins.

A long discussion of the night prayers and the taraweeh prayers preceded in the chapter of prayers in the section of supererogatory prayers including its reward, the number of rak'ah etc. In summary, the night prayers which are called taraweeh in Ramadan were performed by the Prophet (S) eleven rak'ah and he never increased on that number. This is the practice of the Prophet (S) but not an order. In fact when a person asked him of the night prayer, he directed him to pray it in twos until when he fears the dawn and time for fajr, he prays witr. This shows that the number is not a condition but whatever is suitable for a person. So a person may pray taraweeh or tahajjud as the Prophet (S) did which is eleven long rak'ah including witr or he may pray more shorter ones or fewer. A narration that in the time of Umar (r) they prayed twenty rak'ah was shown that it is not authentic rather the authentic one was that they prayed eleven as was the practice of the Prophet (S).

Lailatul-Qadr

About this special night, the night of esteem, high stature and Decree, Allah revealed a whole surah on it, suratul-qadr. **“In the name of Allah the most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Verily, We have sent it (this Quran) down in the night of al-Qadr (Decree). And what will make you know what the night of al-Qadr is? The night of al-Qadr is better than a thousand months (i.e. worshipping Allah therein in supererogatory ones is better than the same over a period of a thousand months which is equal to eighty three years and four months). Therein descend the angels and the Ruh (spirit – angel Jibreel) by Allah’s permission with all decrees, (all that night), there is Peace (and all good for believers) until the appearance of dawn.”** [Surah Qadr]

The reward for worship therein is so high that the Prophet (S) said in a hadith, **“Whoever stood up (to pray the night prayer on) the night of Qadr (laylatul-qadr) with Iman and Ihtisaab (looking forward to the reward by checking the quality of the actions and intentions), his past sins are forgiven.”** Agreed upon its authenticity by Bukhari and Muslim.

When is Lailatul-Qadr?

Most scholars agreed that it is sought for in the month of Ramadan. Imam Abu Hanifah agreed with the rest of the scholars in one of his sayings believing that it is sought in Ramadan but not known when. But in another of his sayings he said it is sometime in the whole year. From the various hadith on this night, it seems that the

Prophet (S) did not say exactly which night it is on but it is highly likely to be one of the last ten of Ramadan and more so in the odd ones of the last ten of Ramadan.

It also seems from the hadith, as some scholars pointed out, that it changes from year to year which of these nights is lailatul-qadr. The wisdom behind this they pointed out is to make the people excited and desirous to worship that many nights earnestly and that is a few nights only that people can manage.

Ibn Hajar said in Bulughul-Maram that the scholars had forty sayings on when the lailatul-qadr is and he mentioned them in his book Fathhul-Bari and said therein, “The strongest of all those is that it is in the odd ones of the last ten; and that it moves (from year to year in one of these ten); and the most hopeful of those nights in the view of a majority of the scholars is the night of the twenty seventh.”

The narration of Mu’awiah (r) that it was on the twenty seventh, Ibn Hajar said the stronger view is that it is a saying of Mu’awiah (r) and not the Prophet (S). In any case, it is not specifying it for every year rather for a particular year it was said in; and a look at the underlying message of all the hadith led to many scholars including Ibn Hajar to say that it changes from year to year within those last ten nights of Ramadan and particularly the odd ones therein as in this hadith in Sahih Bukhari, **“Seek lailatul-qadr in the odd ones of the last ten of Ramadan.”** The wisdom as preceded is to lead the people to strive hard in worship in those nights – a number that is manageable and not too high yet small enough within every year with intense reward to be something that stimulates and excites interest.

Due to the importance of these ten nights, Aisha (r) relates that **“the Messenger of Allah (S) if the ten started, he would fasten his waist belt (meaning be serious and earnest) and make alive his night; and he woke up his family.”** This was agreed upon its authenticity and collection by Bukhari and Muslim.

Dua in Lailatul-Qadr

Aisha (r) asked the Prophet (S), **“O Messenger of Allah (S), do you see, if I knew which night is night of Qadr, what do I say therein?”** He said, **“Say, ‘Allahumma innaka ‘afuwun tuhubbul-afwa fa’fu ‘annee’.”** This means, ‘O Allah, You are Pardoning, You love to pardon, so pardon mee.’ This was collected by Ibn Majah, Tirmidhi and others and Tirmidhi said it is Hasan Sahih and others also agreed it is authentic. This hadith also shows to us that it is advisable to do dua during lailatul-qadr and that it has a high place.

I'tikaf in the last ten nights of Ramadan

In a hadith, "He used to do I'tikaaf (live in a masjid for constant worship) for the last ten days of Ramadan until Allah took him away; and his wives did I'tikaaf after him." Agreed upon it.

From the wisdom that we noticed for the changeable dates for lailatul-qadr from year to year to stimulate and excite the people to worship earnestly in those nights, is the practice of the Messenger of Allah (S) to do I'tikaf. I'tikaf means to reside somewhere and I'tikaf is to reside in the Masjid for nothing except worship of Allah either by reciting Quran, remembering Allah by adh'kaar from sunnah or Quran or by praying. A main purpose is to stay in the masjid in I'tikaf during the last ten nights of Ramadan seeking the lailatul-qadr and its inconceivably high reward by worshiping in the masjid during those ten nights as this is more likely to get the person to worship in a masjid than in a house with other distractions therein.

Aisha (r) said, **"The Prophet (S) used to do I'tikaf in the last ten of Ramadan until Allah took him; and then his wives did I'tikaf after him."** This was agreed upon its authenticity by Bukhari and Muslim. She also said, **"The Messenger of Allah (S) if he wanted to do I'tikaf would pray fajr and then enter his place of I'tikaf."** This was also agreed upon.

Aisha (r) said about the conditions of I'tikaf that, **"The sunnah on the person doing I'tikaf is that he does not (even) visit a sick person, nor visit a funeral procession, nor touch a woman or do mubasharah (which is short of sexual intercourse), nor to go out any need except for that which he has to. And there is no I'tikaf except with a fast and no I'tikaf except in a Masjid Jami (i.e. one where congregational prayers are held)."** This was collected by Abu Dawud and it is Hasan as shown by some scholars.

I'tikaf is a recommended act for men and women to do in the last ten days and nights of Ramadan in a Masjid while fasting in Ramadan. It is sunnah to begin in the last ten from the fajr as in the hadith above. It is recommended to engage as much as possible in worship – prayer, quran, adhkaar etc and not engage in other talk with others. A person is not allowed to leave the masjid except for a real need that he cannot do without as mentioned by Aisha (r) above. He cannot engage in any relationship with his spouse. If they did engage in a sexual intercourse, the I'tikaf is broken as mentioned by Ibn Abbas and he restarts his I'tikaf after that. He may leave I'tikaf at anytime and there is no expiation or anything else due on him and he may join I'tikaf at any time in the last ten days however the sunnah is to do it for the last ten days in Ramadan. Scholars disagreed if fasting is a condition for I'tikaf outside Ramadan as all of the I'tikaf performed by the Prophet (S) were in Ramadan and thus with a fast so it is

at least a sunnah and perhaps a condition. Thus a majority of the scholars said that fasting is a condition for I'tikaf if it is done outside of Ramadan. If someone swears and obliges an I'tikaf upon himself by saying, 'if this happens I am going to do I'tikaf for four days' for example, then it becomes obligatory on him in that case and must do it. Leaving the masjid unnecessarily also negates and breaks the I'tikaf.

A clarification of a misconception

A narration of Hudhaifa (r) has him approaching Ibn Masood (r) and complaining to him that people are doing I'tikaf everywhere in all masjid whereas he said that the Prophet (s) said, **“There is no I'tikaf except in the three masjids.”** Ibn Masood (r) said to him perhaps you forgot and they remembered... Some scholars said the hadith is not authentic. Others did say it is but given that so many of the companions explicitly said I'tikaf is permissible in masjid jami as in the saying of Aisha above, and given that the understanding of the verse in surah baqarah is I'tikaf in many and any masjid, **“And do not engage in foreplay with them (wives) while you are doing I'tikaf in mosques,”** almost all scholars in the history of Islam except for a handful or less have said that I'tikaf can be done in other mosques besides the three (in Mecca, medina and Jerusalem) and the hadith if authentic is referring to a common expression in Arabic. When a statement negates something in that form of expression it sometimes means a negation of its existence but at other times it is just as plausible to mean a negation of the high reward elsewhere that is available in those three places – so it is for an emphasis. And these three masjid do have a high distinct reward for a prayer performed therein. This is why despite the saying of hudhaifa of this statement, Ibn Masood approved of the masses who were doing I'tikaf in other mosques besides the three and others continued to and many companions explicitly allowed it elsewhere too. In fact Ibn Hubiarah said the scholars have a consensus on this point.

I'tikaf to this day is practiced during the last ten nights of Ramadan in mosques around the world and is a very effective means of spiritual uplifting for a Muslim, a source of tremendous reward and a near guarantee to catch the night of Power (lailatul-qadr) with its remarkable reward.

He said, “The journey is not made (literally ride for it is not prepared or fastened) except to three mosques: Masjidul-Haraam (in Mecca), this Masjid of mine (in Medina) and Masjidul-Aqsa (in Quds or Jerusalem).” Agreed upon it.

Wamaa tanfiqee illaa billabi rabbil-aalameen