



# F A S T I N G

## COMMAND ON ITS NATURE & PURPOSE

In Qur'an we read

*In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful*

“Believers, fasting is decreed for you as it was decreed for those before you, so that you may remain God-fearing. *(Fast)* a certain number of days. But whoever of you is ill, or on a journey, *(shall fast instead the same)* number of days later on. Those who find fasting a strain too hard to bear may compensate for it by the feeding of a needy person. He who does good for his own account does himself good thereby; for to fast is to do yourselves good, if you but knew it.”

{Al Baqarah 2: 183-4}

I would rather not relate religious duties to apparent physical advantages, especially in worship. The underlying purpose of all such duties and directives is to equip man adequately to fulfill his role in this life and to prepare him for the achievement of the standard of perfection designed for him in the hereafter. Nevertheless, I do not deny any benefit, which we may observe or scientists may discover to result from the fulfillment of such religious duties and directives. It goes without saying that Allah takes into consideration the physical constitution of man before He lays down his duties for him. We must not, however, relate our religious duties solely to what our human knowledge discovers. Our knowledge is, after all, limited and cannot comprehend fully the divine wisdom behind everything that relates to man and his education and training, let alone comprehend everything that relates to the universe.

Allah realizes that man requires help and motivation in order to respond to duty and fulfill it regardless of its benefits. It takes time for man to get used to a certain duty and to be convinced of its wisdom. Hence, the decree of fasting starts with the address made to the believers, which reminds them of their

essential quality, that is, they believe in Allah. They are then told that fasting has always been a duty required of the believers in all religions. Its principal aim is their education and training so that they acquire a high standard of sensitivity and purity and that the fear of Allah is well established in them:

*“Believers, fasting is decreed for you as it was decreed for those before you, so that you may remain God-fearing.”*

The fear of Allah, then, is the great aim of fasting, which looms large before our eyes. As the believers fulfill this duty, in total obedience to Allah and in pursuit of His pleasure, they feel the quality of fearing Allah to be a life within them. This is indeed the quality which guards their hearts against spoiling their fast by indulging in sin, even if it is of the type, which only passes through the mind. Those who are addressed by the Qur’an are fully aware of the value Allah attaches to this quality of fearing Allah and being conscious of it. Its acquirement is something for which they yearn. Fasting is a tool with which it is achieved, or, we may say, a way which leads to it. Hence, the Qur’an raises it before them as a noble objective which they try to achieve through fasting.

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ  
وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ  
فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ  
وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَانَكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ



They are then told that fasting is prescribed only for a certain number of days. It is not to be practiced every day in their lives. Exempted from it, however, are the ill, until they have recovered, and the traveling, until they have settled:

*“Fast a certain number of days. But whoever of you is ill, or on a journey, shall fast instead the same number of days later on.”*

Taken at its face value, the statement concerning the exemption of the ill and the travelers is general and unrestricted. Hence, any illness or journey is a good reason for exemption from fasting, provided that compensation is made when the case which justifies the exemption no longer obtains. This is my understanding of this general, unqualified Qur’anic statement. Moreover, it is more in line with the Islamic concept of relieving the strain and causing no hardship. The exemption is not related to the severity of the illness or the hardship of the journey; it is related to sickness and traveling generally. The purpose of the exemption is that it is Allah’s wish to make things easy, not hard, for men.

There may be some considerations known to Allah and unknown to man in these two cases. There may be some hardships which may not immediately appear to us or we may tend to overlook. Since Allah has not attached this exemption to any particular reason, we refrain from making any judgement concerning

it. We obey any statement Allah has made, even if its wisdom does not appear immediately to us. What is certain is that there is wisdom behind it, although we may not necessarily recognize it.

The fear of neglecting worship, for whatever reason, has prompted Islamic scholars in adopting a stricter attitude and laying down conditions. This argument, however, does not justify, in my opinion, attaching any restrictions to an unqualified statement made by Allah. Islam does not compel people to be obedient. Its method is to implant in them the fear of Allah so that they obey Him. The acquirement of the quality of fearing Allah is the particular aim of this type of worship. He who tries to make use of certain concessions made by Allah in order to evade fulfilling a duty is, in the first place, devoid of goodness. With such an attitude, the aim behind the religious duty cannot be fulfilled. We must not forget that Islam is a religion laid down by Allah, not man-made. Allah knows best that this religion achieves a perfect balance between the relaxation of certain duties and strict adherence to duty. A certain exemption or concession may serve a certain interest which cannot be served otherwise. Indeed, this must be the case. Hence, the Prophet, *peace on him*, has ordered Muslims to make use of the concessions and exemptions Allah has allowed.

If it so happens that people, in a particular generation, have become corrupt, their reform cannot be achieved through an extra strict application of Allah's rules, but through their education and motivation to acquire the quality of fearing Allah. If a strict application of the rules which govern human transactions may be used as a deterrent or as a means to prevent evil when corruption spreads, the same cannot be applied to matters of worship. Worship is a relationship between man and his Lord which has no direct effect on the interests of human beings, in the same way as the rules governing human transactions have. Appearances in matters of worship are irrelevant, unless worship is based on fearing Allah. If this quality is present, no one would try to evade a duty or utilize a concession except when he is fully satisfied that making use of it is preferable, in obedience to Allah, in the particular case in which he finds himself. A strict application of the rules, which governs, acts of worship generally, or a tendency to restrict the exemptions which have not been qualified originally, may cause some people to refrain from using them when they need them. Moreover, it has little effect in checking those who want to be evasive. It is far better to handle matters in whatever way Allah has made clear to us. He has far more wisdom than *[what may be apparent from]* His rules which lay down duties or relax them.

As for the exemption from fasting in cases of illness, it appears to me that the exemption applies to every case, which may be reasonably described as illness, regardless of its nature or intensity. It is compulsory for anyone who makes use of this exemption to compensate for the days of Ramadan, which he does not fast because of illness, or traveling. Each day is compensated for by fasting one day at any time during the year. The weightier opinion is that there is no need to fast on consecutive days when one fasts in compensation for the days he did not in Ramadan.

TO OUR READERS

**RAMADAN MUBARAK**

Our Holy Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessings of Allah on him*, recommended certain practices to follow when we fast during the month of Ramadan. They are as follows:

**Suhoor:** The meal before starting the fast, which unanimously agreed, assists in overcoming hunger. However, if one chooses not to have a meal, no blame is attached to him. Anas quotes the Prophet, *peace on him*, as saying: **"Have a meal before you fast, for Suhoor is blessed."** [Al Bukhari / Muslim]. Al-Miqdam ibn Maadikarib reports that the Prophet, *peace on him*, has said: **"Have Suhoor, for it is a blessed nourishing meal."** [Al Nisa'ie]. In both pronouncements, the Prophet, *peace on him*, describes this meal as blessed. This is because it helps the fasting person to be active and reduces the burden of fasting.

Having explained that, Suhoor is basically a Sunnah which is deemed done even if one only takes a drink or water or a light snack. Abu Saeed Al Khudri quotes the Prophet, *peace on him*, as saying: **"Suhoor is a blessing. Therefore, do not omit it, even if you only have a drink of water, Allah and the angels pray for those who have Suhoor."** [Ahmad]

One may take Suhoor at any time from midnight till the break of dawn, although it is preferable that it is delayed. Zayd ibn Thabit, a learned companion of the Prophet, *peace on him*, reports: **"We used to take Suhoor with Allah's Messenger before offering our dawn prayers."** Zayd was asked how much time was between the two, and he answered: **"As much as it would take to recite fifty verses of the Qur'an."** [Al Bukhari/Muslim] Amr ibn Maymoon said that the Prophet's companions used to be the first to break their fast at the end of the day and last to have Suhoor. [Al Bayhaqi].

If one is in doubt whether dawn has broken or not, one may

continue to eat and drink until one is certain. Action may not be taken on the basis of doubt. Allah has allowed us to eat and drink until we are certain of the break of dawn, not until we suspect that it is due. He says in the Qur'an:

**"Eat and drink until you can see the white streak of dawn against the blackness of the night. Then resume the fast till nightfall."** [Al Baqarah 2:187]

A man said to Abdullah ibn Abbas, the Prophet's cousin who was a scholar of high repute: **"I may be having my Suhoor when I start having doubts that dawn is due. If this happens, I stop eating."** Ibn Abbas replied: **"Eat if you doubt until you are certain."** Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the founder of the Hanbali school of Fiqh, says: "If one is unsure whether dawn is due, he goes on eating until he is certain."

**Early Finish:** We are strongly recommended to finish our fast immediately when we are certain that the sun has set. Sahl ibn Sa'ad quotes the Prophet, *peace on him*, as saying: **"People will continue to be well as long as they finish their fast immediately after sunset."** [Al Bukhari/Muslim] It is strongly recommended to start with a few dates, an odd number of them, and if not then to start with a drink of water. Anas reports that the Prophet, *peace on him*, used to end his fast with eating a few dates before offering Maghreb prayers. If no dates were available, he would have a few sips of water. Suleiman ibn Amr quotes the Prophet, *peace on him*, as saying: **"If one of**

## GOOD PRACTICES FOR FASTING RECOMMENDED BY THE PROPHET

(PEACE AND BLESSINGS OF ALLAH ON HIM)

{IBN SALEH}

you is fasting, let him end his fast by eating a few dates, and if dates are not available, then let him drink some water. Water purifies.” [Ahmad/Al

Tirmithi] This Hadith suggests that it is preferable to end one’s fast in this way before offering Maghreb prayers. When one has finished praying, one may have his meal, unless the food is already served when he starts with eating. Anas quotes the Prophet, *peace on him*, as saying: “If your evening meal is served, then start by eating before offering Maghreb. Do no hasten to pray before eating.” [Al Bukhari/Muslim]

### **A Short Prayer Before Ending the**

**Fast:** Abdullah ibn Amr quotes the Prophet, *peace on him*, as saying: “As a fasting person is about to end his fast, he is certain to have a prayer answered.” [Ibn Majah] Abdullah used to pray at fast-breaking time: “My Lord! I appeal to you with your mercy which encompasses all to forgive me.” It is also

authentically reported that the Prophet, *peace on him*, used to repeat this prayer: “Thirst is quenched; the veins are watered and the reward is certain, Allah willing.” He is also reported to say: “My Lord! For your sake I have fasted and with your provisions I end my fast.” Al Tirmithi relates that the Prophet, *peace on him*, said: “Three types of person are certain to have their prayers answered: a fasting person until he ends his fast, and a just ruler, and an oppressed person.”

### **Refraining From Anything, Which Conflicts with Fasting:**

Fasting is one of the main acts of worship in Islam. Allah has decreed fasting for us an exercise of self-discipline, which helps us, form good habits. It is essential, therefore, to guard against anything which is in conflict with fasting so that we gain its benefits and attain the quality of Allah-

fearing people, which is the aim of this act of worship. Allah says in the Qur’an:

“Believers, fasting is decreed for you as it was decreed for those before you, so that you may be God-fearing.” [Al Baqarah 2:183]

Fasting is not merely an abstention from eating and drinking. It is an abstention from anything, which Allah has forbidden. Abu Huraira quotes the Prophet, *peace on him*, as saying: “Fasting is not merely to go without food and drink; fasting is to abstain from idle talk and obscene language. If anyone calls you bad names or insults you, answer him by saying: ‘I am fasting, I am fasting.’” [Ibn Khuzaymah & Others] It is also authentically reported on the authority of Huraira that the Prophet, *peace on him*, has said: “God does not need him who continues to indulge in telling lies and cheating to abstain from food and drink.” This means that Allah will not accept such a person’s fasting. The Prophet, *peace on him*, also says: “Many a

fasting person will reap nothing but hunger, and many a night worshipper

will reap nothing but staying up late.” [Al Nisa’ie & Others]

**Using A Toothbrush:** A fasting person is recommended to clean his teeth with the traditional toothbrush, *i.e. miswak*, which is a stick taken from the Arak tree. No toothpaste is used with such tooth stick. It may be used at any time throughout the day. It is also perfectly permissible to use an ordinary toothbrush, but without toothpaste, during the day of fasting.

### **Charity & Recitation Of the Qur’an:**

To give to charity and to recite the Qur’an are two actions encouraged at all times, but they are especially recommended in month of Ramadan. Al Bukhari relates on the authority of Ibn Abbas: “Allah’s Messenger used to be the

most generous of people. He was at his most generous in Ramadan when Gabriel, the angel, used to come to him every night and they recited the Qur'an in turn. During that time, the Prophet, *peace on him*, used to be more charitable than unrestrained wind."

**Voluntary Night Worship Especially During the Last Ten Days:** Al Bukhari and Muslim relate on the authority of Ayesha,

the Prophet's wife: "When the last ten days of Ramadan began, the Prophet, *peace on him*, used to spend the whole night in worship, awaken the other members of his household for night worship, and exercise a high degree of self-control." Muslim also relates: "The Prophet, *peace on him*, used to exercise more effort in worship during the last ten days of Ramadan than at any other time."

﴿رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَطْلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٩١﴾ رَبَّنَا  
إِنَّكَ مَنْ تَدْخِلِ النَّارَ فَقَدْ أَخْزَيْتَهُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ  
﴿١٩٢﴾ رَبَّنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلْإِيمَنِ أَنْ ءَامِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ  
فَأَمْنَا رَبَّنَا فَاعْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّئَاتِنَا وَتَوَفَّنَا مَعَ  
الْأَبْرَارِ ﴿١٩٣﴾ رَبَّنَا وَعَانَا مَا وَعَدْتَنَا عَلَى رُسُلِكَ وَلَا تُخْزِنَا يَوْمَ  
الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّكَ لَا تُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ [آل عمران: ١٩١-١٩٤].



# GUAVA

## "That Exotic Superfruit"

The Guava fruit, *Psidium guajava* and other varieties, comes in green color or red ["strawberry" guava]. It is cultivated in Asia, Central and South America, and Egypt. It is popular in the tropics, but not always found in the West except in the form of juice, jams, fruit leathers, and sauces on the Internet. The fruit comes in some hundred species. Due to its aroma and sweetness, the popular softer one is more prone to drawing fruit flies. This type comes sweet and with either white or dark pink pulp, which contains the phytochemical, lycopene. There is also the bitter kind with coarse skin. Other types have pale yellow or brownish skin. All species of guavas are not only nutrient-dense, but also low in calorie. Guava's richness in nutrients makes the fruit a staple nourishing food in its countries of origin.

Guava stands out due to its unusual combination of nutrients such as the A-C-E vitamins and K. Vitamin C and soluble fiber is particularly abundant in the fruit. The green guava, more than any other type, provides the body with 200mg of C, twice the amount of the daily recommended dose. Pectin (prebiotics fiber) in the fruit is very high, too. Like apples and oranges, guava's richness in pectin (polysaccharides), the gel-like substance produced with cooking, makes the fruit helpful in lowering cholesterol, hence reducing risk of cardiovascular and digestive disorders.

The tough seeds in are rich in omega-3-and-6 the unpleasant hard seeds, with the juice, or else they thoroughly in order to get to fats.



the center of the pulp fatty acids. To avoid they can be blended should be chewed the "heart-healthy"

The 'strawberry' guava, in particular, contains an elevated amount of carotenoids (beta-cryptoxanthin and lycopene, precursors of vitamin A). Lycopene found in 'strawberry' guava has drawn the interest of researchers. In test tube experiments, the phytochemicals showed activity on free radicals, giving hope for the treatment of cancer, prostate in particular. Being abundant in the fruit, lycopene puts guava in the forefront for fighting cancer.

Guava's abundance in phytonutrients such as carotenoids (lycopene, beta-carotene, beta-cryptoxanthin); polyphenols (anthocyanins); and soluble fiber (pectin) has attracted medical research because of their cell protecting properties.

The guava fruit and leaves extracts and metabolites were found by Mexican scientists to be effective in therapies for digestive tract ailments, allergies, inflammation and pain, as it was seen in traditional healing. In traditional medicine, the guava fruit and its leaves are found to provide balancing

properties to the body. Guava leaves have antibacterial and anti-inflammatory effects, aspects which are being researched for the treatment of chronic diseases. In laboratory trials, essential oils of the guava leaf showed activity on cancer cells. The cancer process seemed to slow down by extracts of guava leaves or its bark.

In ancient therapies, guava leaves were known for their antibacterial and antiviral effects. The ancient Egyptians drank the infusion of lightly boiled guava leaves to soothe persistent coughs due to the leaves' anti-inflammatory properties. They should be lightly boiled and left to steep for 20 minutes. Such healing effects have yet to be proven by scientific research and human trials. From personal experience, I found the infusion relieving to cough and detoxifying to the body, renewing energy. The low-calorie fruit adds to the delight of eating it without worries about weight gain. For better absorption, fruits should be taken on an empty stomach. Pectin in the fruit is an important ingredient for making preserves, jellies, jams, marmalades, salsas, and sauces. Guava juice is particularly popular in the Middle East, Mexico, and South Africa. In Central American and Caribbean countries, people enjoy the fruit in salsas and sauces. Recently, the exotic guava has gained wider popularity. We just have to patiently wait for medical and scientific research to support traditional claims. Meanwhile, why not enjoy this healthy superfruit!



*(Individuals with medical conditions or on medication should consult their physician when they decide to introduce anything new in their diet even if it is natural)*

Mariam AliRaza



فِيهَا فَانِكِهَةٌ وَالنَّخْلُ ذَاتُ الْأَكْمَامِ ﴿١١﴾

وَالْحَبُّ ذُو الْعَصْفِ وَالرَّيْحَانُ ﴿١٢﴾

فَبِأَيِّ آيَاتِنَا تَكذِّبَانِ ﴿١٣﴾

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْحَيِّ الَّذِي لَا يَمُوتُ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِهِ وَكَفَى بِهِ بِذُنُوبِ عِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا

# RAMADAN & Fasting

## Brushing Teeth or Using Miswak

*A miswak is a short stick, which is taken from the branches of a particular tree, known as 'Arak'. When the outer skin is removed it can be used as a toothbrush. Normally it is used without toothpaste.*

To use a miswak or a toothbrush when one is fasting is permissible. However, when one uses toothpaste, one puts oneself unnecessarily in a position, which could spoil one's fasting. When one rinses his mouth, he needs to do that thoroughly, not as he does normally in ablution. Therefore, there is really a danger of swallowing something involuntarily. That is enough to render his fasting invalid for the day. From another point of view, it is discouraged to use a miswak or toothbrush after midday on any fasting day. The Prophet, *peace on him*, mentions that the smell of the mouth of a person who is fasting is "better, in Allah's view, than the smell of musk". When he uses miswak or a toothbrush, he spoils that smell. This is the reason why it is discouraged. But it does not invalidate his fasting if he does not swallow anything of the water with which he rinses his mouth or washes out the toothpaste.

## Compensation - Confusion

*Verse 184 of Surah Al Baqarah allows certain compensation for not fasting when one is able to fast. This makes 'fasting' a matter of choice. The verse requires compensation by fasting later, if one is compelled by illness or travel not to fast in Ramadan. There seems to be a conflict here. Kindly elaborate.*

There is absolutely no contradiction here between the two verses to which the reader refers. Let us first of all render in English these two verses and the one that comes before them

in order to bear them in mind as we discuss the point in question.

*"Believers, fasting is decreed for you as it was decreed for those before you, so that you may be God-fearing. [Fast] on a certain number of days. But whoever of you is ill or on a journey shall fast instead the same number of days later on. Those who find 'fasting' a strain too hard to bear may compensate for it by feeding a needy person. He who does good of his own account does himself good thereby. To fast is better for you, if you only knew it. It was in the month of Ramadan that the Qur'an was revealed; guidance for mankind and a self-evident proof of that guidance and a standard to distinguish right from wrong. Therefore, whoever of you is present in that month shall fast throughout the month; but he who is ill or on a journey shall fast instead the same number of days later on. Allah desires that you have ease. He does not desire that you be afflicted with hardship.*

*You are, however, required to complete the necessary number of days and to extol and glorify Allah for having guided you aright and to tender your thanks."* {Al Baqarah 183-185}

The first of these 3 verses is concerned with the duty of fasting in general; making clear that fasting is part of God's faith in its previous forms as well as in its final Islamic form. With regard to the second verse, Imam Ghazali explains:

**"Fasting was made obligatory for Muslims at some time during the second year of Hijrah, the emigration from Makkah to Madinah shortly before the ordinance of Jihad, or striving for God's cause. As a new duty, fasting is at first hard for the Muslims to observe. Those who found it strenuous were, therefore, exempted and were required instead to feed one needy person for every day they missed of Ramadan. A**

general recommendation to feed the needy was then made, either as a voluntary act in itself or by feeding more than the minimum number of needy people in lieu of fasting. This was followed by the recommendation that apart from cases of illness or travel, fasting would be more beneficial and preferable despite the hardship or discomfort it might cause. There is here an obvious element of education and training of will power to enable Muslims to make the effort to fast. These recommendations were a step forward of the exemption for non-Traveling healthy people and making fasting in the month of Ramadan obligatory, as given in verse 185.

The concession remained valid for elderly people who find fasting in Ramadan too strenuous and are not expected to be able to fast

This clearly means that the concession given to healthy Muslims in the second verse, which remained in force for some time, was later withdrawn.

That concession made it possible to compensate for non-fasting by feeding a needy person two meals for every day of fasting one misses. Such compensation is no longer available except in the case of elderly people who are too weak to fast or those who have a chronic illness and who are unlikely to recover. It is also open to the pregnant and breastfeeding women in certain situations.

### Compensation - the Right Course

*When compensating for not fasting, we are required to*

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ  
وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ  
فَلْيَصُمْهُ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ  
أُخْرٍ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ  
وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَيْتِكُمْ  
وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ



*feed one poor person two meals for each day. Can we feed two poor persons one meal each?*

**Compensating for not fasting during Ramadan is normally by fasting a day instead.**

Feeding a poor person is acceptable as an alternative **only when** such compensation by fasting is impossible, either because the person concerned is too old or has a chronic illness that is unlikely to be cured. In this case, for each day of not fasting, the compensation is to feed ONE poor person TWO meals.

Giving one meal each to two poor persons is not right because the relevant Qur'anic verse uses the singular form.

at a later date. This verse 185, established fasting in Ramadan as obligatory for all healthy non-Traveling Muslims, with no concessions except for the elderly, as pointed out above. With the exception of the sick or those on a journey, it has thus become binding on all Muslims who either see the new moon of the lunar month of Ramadan themselves, or learn of it by any other reliable means, to observe the fast in Ramadan.

To complete a whole month, sick people or those on a journey are required to make up for days missed in Ramadan by fasting an equal number of days at a later date in the year.”



### Concession of Not Fasting

*At times, I get very severe pain my neck which needs analgesic tablets to relieve because I suffer from cervical spondylitis. It happened once or twice in the month of Ramadan that the pain was so severe that I could not bear it any longer and broke my fast to take the tablets. Should I still feed one poor person for breaking my fast? What procedure should I follow if it happens again? Perhaps I should add that I get such severe pain two or three times a month.*

It is important that a Muslim should know enough of Islamic teachings to enable him fulfill his duties in the proper manner without accidentally invalidating any duty he is fulfilling. To do this, he needs to study a few Islamic principles and learn the regulations, which governs each of the main duties of Islam, particularly those, which have a practical aspect. There are certain matters, which you can fulfill once you know the Islamic position on them. Once you learn that it is forbidden to steal, lie, backbite, give false testimony, drink intoxicants, you can refrain from doing any of these vices immediately, without any need to learn anything more concerning them. It is needless to say that if you undertake a more detailed study of the Islamic principles, you will be able to understand how Islam views every aspect of human activity, but that is not particularly essential to implement such teachings of Islam which relate to these particular aspects.

On the other hand, it is not enough that you learn that it is your duty to pray, pay Zakah, fast or do the pilgrimage. In each one of these, you have to make a further study in order to know when or how you have to fulfill any of these duties. Moreover, you should learn what things to avoid in order not to render your efforts null

and void. How can any Muslim offer a valid prayer, if he does not know that he has to have ablution before it and to stand up facing the direction which leads from his spot to the Ka'bah in Makkah and that he should offer five prayers every day and that each one of them has its time range during which it must be offered? How can one fast properly if he does not know that it is during the month of Ramadan that fasting is a duty, or that he should start this fasting at dawn and finish at sunset?

Fasting in the month of Ramadan is one of the main Islamic duties. Every Muslim who is able to do so must fast every day of the month of Ramadan from dawn to dusk, during which hours he may not eat or drink or have sex with his wife. Allah knows that people may go through certain conditions when they cannot fulfill the duties of fasting or when its fulfillment presents considerable hardship. Therefore, he has allowed people who may have such conditions not to fast on those days when fasting becomes too hard, outlining the conditions for doing so, requiring them at the same time to compensate by fasting later in the year an equal number of days to those days of Ramadan during which they could not fast. This means that the idea of compensating for non-fasting in Ramadan is acceptable while such an idea is not acceptable in another major Islamic duty, namely, prayers. It is not open to any person to decide that he is unable to offer prayers at this particular time and he will offer it at a later time. This principle is acceptable in fasting on certain conditions. Moreover, the compensation is of duration similar to the concession. If a person does not fast two days in Ramadan for valid reasons, he has to compensate for them by fasting two days (sometime) later. There is no punishment and no need for doing an additional duty by way of atonement.

The situations which allow or require a Muslim not to fast during the month of Ramadan are illness, traveling and, for women only, being pregnant, breast-feeding and having menstrual or postnatal period. There are certain details for each of these conditions.



When people know about the concession of not fasting when one is ill or traveling, they assume that the illness must be of the severe variety and the travel must be of the very tiring variety to qualify the ill person or the traveler to make use of this concession. This is not right. Allah has stated this condition in the Qur'an in the most general of terms. Therefore, any situation which people normally describe as illness is all that is needed for a person to make use of Allah's concession. The only thing required of him is to compensate after Ramadan is over by fasting one day for each day of non-fasting in Ramadan. It is not necessary that those compensatory days be offered consecutively. Compensatory fasting may be taken at any time during the rest of the year until the next month of Ramadan is due.

Exemption from fasting during illness or travel is a concession of which all Muslims may avail themselves. If they fast, then their fasting is valid, although it is perhaps more preferable they should avail themselves of the concession. In the case of a woman in her menstruation or her postnatal period, non-fasting is mandatory. If she fasts, her fasting is not acceptable. Indeed, she puts herself in a difficult position if she does. Compensation by fasting a similar number of days would still be required in these cases.

As for a woman who is pregnant or who is breast-feeding, she may not fast if she fears for her health or (for the health of) her baby. I will

come to the compensation she has to offer in a little while. My reader asks about feeding a poor person? This is a compensation, for not fasting, which was required of Muslims in the very early days of Islam when fasting was not obligatory. A Muslim could then choose not to fast, but to feed a poor person instead. Ever since the second year of the Prophet's settlement in Madinah, fasting in the month of Ramadan became obligatory on all Muslims who are able to undertake this duty. It is no longer a matter of choice between fasting and feeding a poor person. However, if a person is in such a condition that makes him unable to fast in Ramadan and unable to fast later, what can he do? The answer is that compensation by feeding a poor person, two meals of the average type he has in his home normally. He may, if he wishes, give the poor person the cost of that meal in cash, according to a number of eminent scholars. The persons to whom this opinion remains valid are:

1. A very old man or woman who can no longer bear the difficulty of fasting from dawn to dusk
2. A person who is chronically ill and has little hope of recovery
3. A woman who is pregnant or breast-feeding, particularly one who finds herself pregnant this year, breast-feeding next year, pregnant again the following year and breast-feeding the year after that. She is thus in a similar situation to a person who is chronically ill.

In all these cases, compensation may be offered by way of feeding a poor person for one day (two meals) in place of each missed day of fasting.

In this condition which my reader has put to me, this last method of compensation does not apply. When he has this pain which he says he

has two or three times each month, he may go ahead and have his pain killer tablet. What he is required to do is to fast one day in compensation for each day of non-fasting in Ramadan.



### Early Suhoor

*Could you please explain whether it is permissible to take the Suhoor meal on a fasting day between midnight and 3 am instead of the prescribed time, as many people do? They feel that this is easier for them since they have to go to work in the morning.*

There is no prescribed time for the meal one should take in preparation for a day of fasting. However, the Prophet, *peace on him*, has recommended us to take this meal as late as possible, shortly before the start of fasting. Needless to say, this reduces the hardship that is inevitably involved in fasting. Moreover, it helps to have the perfect start of the day, with the dawn prayer following shortly after having this meal. This, one attends to both acts of worship in the best possible way. Unfortunately, many people prefer to stay up late at night in Ramadan, and when they want to go to sleep, they take a meal to help them with their fasting. They finish a couple of hours before dawn prayer and they go to bed. In the majority of cases they fail to wake up for dawn prayer. This is definitely wrong, and they should adopt the other way, which is the one recommended by the Prophet, *peace on him*.

### In Polar Areas

*There is quite a considerable Muslim population in the polar areas where the night extends for six months followed by a day of similar duration. Crews of merchant navy go through these areas, and some Muslims among*

*them are at a loss how to observe prayer and fasting. Please advise.*

Only at the point of the North or South poles does the night and day extend to such a long period that the whole year consists of one day and one night. As you move away from the points of the pole, the situation changes with shorter days and nights until you come to the temperate climate. However, there are towns in Northern Europe, particularly in Norway, where you may find the Midsummer Day extending to 22 days or more, and the Midwinter Night being of similar duration. In these situation, Muslims who find themselves in these areas should estimate the times of prayer and observe prayer and fasting, so that they fast a reasonable day and observe five prayers in a 24 hour day.

This is based on the Hadith in which the Prophet, *peace on him*, mentions that the Impostor “will rule for forty days: One like a week, and one like a month and one like a year.” When he was asked whether it would be sufficient to offer 5 prayers only on the day which is as long as a year, the Prophet, *peace on him*, answered: “No. You should estimate an appropriate measure to offer your prayers.” The proper estimate for the towns and cities in these areas is to take the length of their average day and the timings of prayers on that day. They could follow that estimate throughout the period when the time is abnormal. Crews of merchant navy may have a similar estimate.

