

A BRIEF NOTE ON **FASTING** AND **ZAKAAT AL-FITR**



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Fasting

Is a form of worship by abstaining from things which nullify it, from dawn till sunset.

Fasting in the Month of Ramadan

Ramadan is one of the twelve Arabic months. It is a month which is venerated in the Islamic religion, and it is distinguished from the other months by a number of characteristics and virtues, including the following: Allah has made fasting this month the fourth pillar of Islam, as He says (interpretation of the meaning): “The month of Ramaḍān [is that] in which was revealed the Qur’an, a guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion. So whoever sights [the crescent of] the month, let him fast it; and whoever is ill or on a journey - then an equal number of other days. Allāh intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship and [wants] for you to complete the period and to glorify Allāh for that [to] which He has guided you; and perhaps you will be grateful.” (2:185)

And it was narrated in *al-Sahihayn* (*al-Bukhari*, 8; *Muslim*, 16) from the hadith of *Ibn ‘Umar* that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Islam is built on five (pillars): the testimony that there is no god except Allah and that Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) is the Messenger of Allah; establishing prayer; paying zakah; fasting Ramadan; and Hajj to the House (the Ka’bah).”

People in Fasting:

1. Fasting is obligatory upon every Muslim who reached puberty age and who is in his/her senses, can bear it, and is not travelling.
2. New Muslims do not have to compensate for the years missed before Islam.
3. Children don’t have to fast but they should be encouraged to fast to get used to it.
4. The insane do not have to fast nor do they have to feed others in lieu of fasting even if they are adults. Similar is the case of demented or very old persons who are not in full command of their senses.

5. Invalid, such as very old persons, or a person suffering from illness with no hope of recovery should feed a needy person for every day missed.
6. Persons who are ill and waiting for recovery may not fast, if they find it too difficult but they should compensate the days missed after their recovery.
7. Pregnant and feeding mothers may not fast, if they find it too difficult on themselves or out of fear for their children but they should compensate the days missed after Ramadan or when ever they have no more fear (for themselves or their children).
8. Women during their monthly cycles (menses) or bleeding after childbirth (*Nifas*) should not fast during these days but they should compensate after purity from menses or childbirth.
9. Persons who need to break the fast to save the life of someone else (such as one caught in a fire or drowning) should do so and compensate by fasting afterward.
10. Travellers can choose whether to fast during their journey or compensate for it later on after reaching their destination. This is good for all types of travellers: those who are travelling for performing *Umrah* or those who travel because their profession necessitates it such as taxi or truck drivers.

Things that do not nullify the Fasting:

- ⦿ Fasting is not affected by eating or drinking something by mistake, or unknowingly or by being forced to do so – on the authority of the words of Allah the Almighty:

“O our Lord, punish us not if we forget or commit mistakes” (2:286)

“But there is no blame on you, if you make a mistake therein. (what counts is) intention of your hearts.” (33:5)

- ⦿ So the fast will be valid even if someone eats or drinks something not remembering that he/she is fasting.

- ⦿ Or if someone eats or drinks assuming that the sun has set or that the dawn has not yet broken, it will not spoil his fasting because he did so unknowingly.
- ⦿ Or if someone gargles and water reaches his/her throat unintentionally, it will not spoil his/her fast as he/she did not intend it.
- ⦿ Discharge of semen while in sleep also does not spoil the fast as one has no control over it.
- ⦿ Using toothpaste and brush.
- ⦿ Minor Bleeding such as nasal or finger bleeding or during the extraction of a tooth or blood test etc., does not break the fast as they are not regarded as cupping or major bleeding.

Things that nullify the Fasting:

- ⦿ Sexual intercourse: If someone indulges in it during the day light hours of *Ramadan*, he/she has to compensate for it by fasting in addition to a heavy penalty which is freeing a Muslim slave or (if he can't find one) he/she must fast sixty consecutive days or (if he/she cannot do so) he/she must feed sixty hungry poor Muslims.
- ⦿ Indulging in intentional secretion of semen by masturbation, caressing, kissing or hugging, etc.
- ⦿ Eating or drinking anything whether beneficial or harmful.
- ⦿ Smoking.
- ⦿ Taking dietary injections or dietary supplements which are used instead of food, because such medicines are as good as food and drinks. Other types of injections have no food value do not break the fast whether they are intramuscular or intravenous and irrespective of whether their taste is felt in the throat or not.
- ⦿ Bleeding of menses or after childbirth.
- ⦿ Forcing out blood from the body through cupping or similar means.
- ⦿ Blood donation or reception.
- ⦿ Vomiting intentionally. Vomiting by itself does not spoil the fast.

RULES:

1. A person can make intention of fasting in the state of impurity and to continue his fasting after taking bath after dawn or daybreak.
2. A woman coming out of her menses or childbirth bleeding before dawn must fast even if she took a bath after dawn.
3. It is permissible for a fasting person to apply ointments, lotions etc. on his/her head or body or to use perfumes, but he/she should avoid inhaling the 'bakhoor' smoke (incense). It is also permissible to extract one's tooth, to apply medicines to one's wounds, put medicine drops in one's eyes and nose, even if the drops are tasted.
4. Brushing of teeth with *Miswak* is not only permissible but also desirable, during all hours of fasting.
5. A fasting person can cool himself with water or air conditioner etc.
6. It is permissible to use medical spray in the mouth to get relief from suffocation due to pressure or asthma.
7. It is permissible to wet one's lips if they turn dry, or to wash the inside of the mouth with water without gargling.
8. Following the tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him), it is desirable to delay taking 'Suhoor' (the meal before dawn) and to take the breakfast exactly after sunset. It is preferable to break the fast with fresh dates or any other type of dates or (not finding these) with water or (if unable to find water) with any permissible (Halal) food or drink. If, however, one has none of these he should simply make an intention to break the fast as soon as he/she finds something to eat or drink.
9. A fasting person should try to do more and more in obedience to Allah during his fast and avoid disobedience to Him.
10. A fasting person should perform his obligations and abstain from what is prohibited. He should offer his daily prayers on time in congregation (if it is obligatory upon him) and must abstain from telling lies, backbiting, deceiving others, dealing in interest (usury), or indulging in anything prohibited – whether verbal or in actions. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: **“One who does not give up forged speech and evil actions, Allah is not in need of his leaving his food and drink”.**

ZAKAAT AL-FITR:

Zakat al-Fitr is a kind of charity (*sadaqah*) that is obligatory at the end of the month of Ramadan.

Wisdom of *Zakat al-Fitr*:

Ibn 'Abbaas said: "The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) made *Zakat al-Fitr* obligatory as a means of purifying the fasting person from idle talk and foul language, and to feed the poor. Whoever pays it before the prayer, it is an accepted zakah, and whoever pays it after the prayer, it is just a kind of charity (*sadaqah*)." (Reported by Abu Dawood, 1371)

Purifying means purifying the soul of the one who has fasted Ramadan.

'Foul language', refers to obscene speech.

'Feeding [the poor]', refers to food that is edible.

- ⦿ Consists of a '*saa*' (about 2.5 kgs) of food such as rice, wheat, dates or any similar type of food.
- ⦿ *Zakaat Al-Fitr* would be given before the prayer of *Eid*, and it may be paid a day or two days before *Eid*.
- ⦿ It is not proper to give *Zakaat Al-Fitr* in the form of money or clothes or any other articles other than food
- ⦿ It is not permissible to delay giving *Zakaat Al-Fitr* later than the *Eid* prayers, except for some valid reasons.
- ⦿ *Zakaat Al-Fitr* should be given on behalf of every male or female Muslim.

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