



THE ESSENTIALS OF RAMADAN

The Month of Fasting



Answers to Some of the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is Ramadan?

The month of Ramadan is the ninth month of the Hijri year (which is a lunar year). It is month in which Allah subhana wa ta'ala opens all the doors of His mercy and blessings for mankind and with its advent comes a great opportunity to cleanse ourselves of our sins and to reap the numerous rewards and blessings from the Cherisher and the Sustainer of the Aalameen (mankind, jinns and all that exists). In order for us to fully benefit from this month we must not only remind ourselves about what Ramadan is, but we must become fully aware of the essentials of Ramadan; that is, we must know how to gain the most from this month through our worship of Allah subhana wa ta'ala.

The observation of Ramadan is mandated upon us through Al-Qur'an and Sunnah, and the Ijmaa (the consensus of the scholars). Allah subhana wa ta'ala reminds us: "O you who believe fasting is prescribed to you, as it was prescribed to those before you that you may acquire taqwa." (*Al-Qur'an 2:183*)

The verse ends with a strong hint to the spiritual benefit of fasting: "That ye may acquire taqwa." The Arabic word used is *tattaqun*. It is originally from *waqa*, to protect, the same base word used for fear of Allah subhana wa ta'ala, *taqwa*; for when you fear Allah subhana wa ta'ala, you protect yourself against His wrath and against things that He has forbidden.

Furthermore, Allah subhana wa ta'ala states: "Ramadan is the month in which was sent down the

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"O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may learn self restraint"

Al-Qur'an (2:183)

Quran, as a guide to mankind, and also clear proofs for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong). So anyone of you who witnesses the month should spend it in fasting..." (*Al-Qur'an, 2:185*)

Virtues of Ramadan

The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) reported in a hadith Qudsi that Allah subhana wa ta'ala said: "All acts done by the sons of Adam are meant for him, except fasting. It is exclusively meant for Me, and I (alone) will reward him for it." (*Bukhari and Muslim*)

In another hadith, Abu Hurairah (radhiallah

they break their fast. Allah subhana wa ta'ala beautifies his paradise each day and says to it: "My righteous servants are about to be spared suffering and harm, then they will be sent to you."

Laylatul Qadr, "The night of Power," which is better than a thousand months, occurs during this month. Narrated 'Ubada bin As-Samit: The Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) came out to inform us about the Night of Qadr but two Muslims were quarreling with each other. So, the Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) said, "I came out to inform you about the Night of Qadr but such-and-such persons were quarreling, so the news about it had been taken away; yet that might be for your own good, so search for it on the 29th, 27th and 25th (of Ramadan). (*Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 32, Number 240*)

Those fasting, receive forgiveness of their sins on the last night of Ramadan. On the authority of Abu Hurairah (radhiallah anho) who reported that Allah's Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) had said: "Whoever fasts during Ramadan with faith and seeking its reward from Allah subhana wa ta'ala, his past sins will be forgiven." (*Bukhari and Muslim*)

Allah subhana wa ta'ala saves a number of people from hellfire during each night of Ramadan. The fasting person's supplications are not rejected. Amr bin Al-'As reported that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) said, "Indeed as to the one who fasts, during the time he breaks his fast, his supplication will not be turned

anho) relates that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) once said when Ramadan came: "A blessed month has arrived. Observing it in fasting is mandated on you (the believers). During this month, the gates of Paradise will be opened and the gates of Hellfire will be closed. The evil ones (*Shayatin*) will be handcuffed. In it there is one night, during which worship is better than worship in a thousand months. Whoever is denied its blessings has been denied the biggest blessing." (*Abmed, Nasaae, and Bayhaqi*)

During this month the Angels ask Allah's forgiveness for those fasting until



The Essentials of Ramadan (continued)

away by Allah.”

As reported by Al-Tirmidhi, the Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam) has been reported as saying: “There are three categories of people whose supplications will not be rejected: the person who observes the fast until he breaks it, a just ruler, and a person who has been oppressed.”

Ascertaining the Hilal (Crescent) of Ramadan

The beginning and end of the month of Ramadan is ascertained by physical sighting (*ru'eyah*) of the new crescent moon (*hilal*) of Ramadan. Thus, with the sighting of the new moon, of the month of Ramadan is ascertained, the fast begins. The fast ends with the sighting of the hilal of the tenth month, Shawwal.

In the event that clouds, smog, or fog block the sky and prevent sighting of the hilal of Ramadan on the 29th of Shaaban, then Shaaban is considered to be of 30 days and the fast begins the next day. Similarly, if after the 29th of Ramadan, we are unable to sight the hilal of Shawwal due to cloudiness or obstruction, we fast on the 30th of Ramadan as well. The next day is then Eidul Fitr, the Festival of Fast-Breaking.

What Should be said on Sighting the Hilal

It is recommended that whoever sights the hilal (crescent) of Ramadan, or any other month for that matter, or when informed about the new crescent, should say: *Allahu Akbar, Allabumma abillahu 'alaina bil yumni wa Iman, Was Salaamata wal Islam, Rabbi wa*

rabbika Alah. (Tirmidhi) Meaning: Allah is Greatest. O Allah subhana wa ta'ala, make its beginning, the beginning of prosperity, faith, peace, and total submission to Allah subhana wa ta'ala. Your Lord and mine is Allah.

Elements of Fasting

There are two basic elements that constitute the essence of Islamic fasting and make one's fasting acceptable. The first is abstinence of fast breakers from the break of dawn (*fajr*) until sunset. Here abstinence refers to refraining from food, drink and intercourse. The second element of fasting is intention (*niyyah*). This remarkable element is not unique to fasting; it permeates every ounce of the believer's undertakings from Salaat, to Zakaat, to Hajj.

For Whom is Fasting Mandatory

The obligation of fasting is mandatory on a person who has fulfilled these requirements: He or she must be a sane Muslim, must have reached puberty, must be healthy, and not in a state of travel; and additionally for women, they must be in a state of purity (clean from menstruation and post childbirth bleeding).

For Whom is Fasting Not Mandatory

Elderly people, who have reached the point of absent-mindedness and aimless talk, (*al-badhayaan*) or who cannot comprehend what he or she is doing or saying are not only excused from fasting but are also not required to feed the needy for the days missed, because their case is

like that of a child before reaching the age of discretion (*tamyeez*).

However, for people with a physical disability (*'al-'ajiz*), i.e. persons who are mentally sound but physically weak and the observance of fast will further weaken their body, feeding an indigent (see the next section) for each day becomes a substitute for fasting.

A pregnant woman's or a nursing mother's decision to fast depends on how they feel. If they eat, they do so for the health of themselves and their babies. If they feel that fasting may jeopardize their life and injure the unborn or newly born, the Lawgiver gives them permission to break the fast. They will have to make it up at any time after Ramadan before the next Ramadan.

The traveler has a choice between fasting and breaking the fast, regardless of the length of the journey: whether the journey is an emergency, for Hajj, to visit relatives, for business, or if he is a frequent traveler like airplane pilots, bus and truck drivers, train engineers, or ship captains. Allah subhana wa ta'ala states: “But if anyone is ill or on a journey (the prescribed period should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you in difficulties...” (*Al-Qur'an, 2:185*) Allah subhana wa ta'ala repeated this verse twice to underscore the fact that it is not abrogated with the general command to fast.

An ill person whose prognosis indicates a serious condition, but not a terminal one, is granted permission (*rukhsah*) to break his fast which must be made up later.

Feeding (*It'am*)

For feeding, you have a choice between providing a poor

person about one kilogram and ten grams of wheat, rice, or any kind of staple of the best kind, or to provide a meal after the month of Ramadan, by preparing food and inviting poor people, their number equal to the number of days you missed.

Redemption of Ramadan

The groups who are permitted to break the fast due to the reasons mentioned should redeem the day(s) they missed after Ramadan. Allah subhana wa ta'ala states: “The prescribed number (should be made up) from days later.” (*Al-Qur'an 2:185*) If he breaks the whole month, the whole month should be redeemed. If the month is 30 days, 30 days are due on him. If the month is 29 days, 29 days are due. Technically, the time period of redemption is the whole year before next Ramadan.

Manners of Fasting (Adaab As-Siyaam)

In Islam, for any act of worship to be valid and acceptable, it must be observed in accordance with the instruction of Allah subhana wa ta'ala and the practice of the Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam). For Siyaam, they include:

Sahuur - This is a meal taken shortly before the break of dawn. There is consensus that this meal is a highly recommended Sunnah. It is recommended, however, to delay it till shortly before the time of Fajr (dawn) prayer. Remember that Allah subhana wa ta'ala says: “And eat and drink until the white thread of dawn appears to you distinct from its black thread.” (*Al-Qur'an 2:184*)

In a hadith by Zaid bin Thabit (radhiallahoho anho) he related that: “We ate sahuur with the Messenger of Allah



The Essentials of Ramadan (continued)

(sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam) then we went to pray Subh". I asked the Messenger, "What was the time period between sahuur and prayer?" He responded, "The time period between them is the equivalent of the time it takes to recite fifty verses in Al-Qur'an." (Bukhari and Muslim)

Hastening to Break the Fast - The Lawgiver highly recommended that the fast be broken as soon as the sun set is certain. The Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam) said: "The people will always remain in a good state as long as they hurry in the breaking of the fast and delay the sahuur." (Bukhari and Muslim)

In a report by Anas (radhiallahohun 'anhu), he said: "The Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam) used to break fast with fresh, ripe dates *rutub*, before he offered his Maghrib prayer. If they were not available, he would break with regular dates, or drink water if there were no dates." (Abu Dawud Tirmidhi).

Supplications During and at Breaking of Fast

In the Sunan of Ibn Maja, Abdullah bin 'Amru bin 'Al-As (radhiallahohun 'anhu) reported that the Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam) said: "Indeed, as to the faster, about the time he breaks his fast, his du'a (supplication) will not be turned away by Allah." In a report by Tirmidhi (radhiallahohun 'anhu), the Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam) has been reported as saying: "There are three categories of people whose du'a (supplications) will not be rejected: the person who observes the fast until he breaks, a just ruler, and the person who has been oppressed."

It has been reported that the Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam) used to say the following: "*Allabumma Inne as'aluka birahma - tikaal Latee wasi'at kulla shain an Taghfira le*" (O Allah, I request You by Your mercy that encompasses everything in the creation to forgive me) Also: "*Dhahaba Zaman, wabta lati'uruq, wa Thabatal Ajru In Sha Allah subhana wa ta'ala.*" (The thirst is gone and the veins are wet again and the reward is established, Allah willing.)

Things Permitted During Fast

Al-Ghusul (bathing), Al-Kuhl (coloring the eyelids, or using eye drops), Qublah (married couples expressing affection toward each other by embracing or kissing) and Madmadah (rinsing of mouth) are permitted during the fast.

Nullifiers of Fast that Entail Redemption (Al-Qada)

These include: intentionally eating or drinking, taking substitutes for food and drink orally or through an intravenous injection, inducing vomiting, bleeding as a result of menstruation, and ejaculation.

Nullifiers of Fast that Entail Redemption and Expiation (Al-Qada and Kaffaraah)

When a faster intentionally has total marital relations with his wife during the daytime, the fast is invalidated. This is the most serious of fast breakers. That is why, besides redeeming the day, there is severe expiation (*kaffaraah mughallazah*) to be observed after Ramadan.

Expiation can be obtained by performing one of the following:

- Freeing a slave man or woman in bondage. If a man does not have a bondman, he can purchase one and set him free.
- Fasting for two consecutive months.
- Feeding sixty poor people an average meal.

Laylatul Qadr (The Night of Power)

The Quran says about laylatul qadr: "We have indeed revealed this (Qur'an) in the Night of Power. And what will explain to thee what the Night of Power is? The Night of Power is better than a Thousand Months. Therein come down the Angels and the Spirit By Allah's permission on every errand. It is peace till the dawning of the day."

Laylatul Qadr (Night of Power) is better spiritually than a thousand months!! It is such a night in which the angels and the Spirit (which possibly refers to Angel Gabriel) come down to do whatever is granted by God's permission, and there is peace until the dawning of the day. Subhan Allah!!! The following is a hadith in Sahih Bukhari that points to it being on the 21st of Ramadan (Volume 3, Book 32, Number 235):

Narrated Abu Said Al-Khudri (radhiallahohun 'anhu): Allah's Apostle (sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam) used to practice Itikaf (in the mosque) in the middle third of Ramadan and after passing the twenty nights he used to go back to his house on the 21st, and the people who were in Itikaf with him also used to go back to their houses.

Once in Ramadan, in which he practiced Itikaf, he established the night prayers at the

night in which he used to return home, and then he addressed the people and ordered them whatever Allah wished him to order and said, "I used to practice Itikaf for these ten days (i.e. the middle 3rd but now I intend to stay in Itikaf for the last ten days (of the month); so whoever was in Itikaf with me should stay at his place of seclusion. I have verily been shown (the date of) this Night (of Qadr) but I have forgotten it. So search for it in the odd nights of the last ten days (of this month). I also saw myself (in the dream) prostrating in mud and water." On the night of the 21st, the sky was covered with clouds and it rained, and the rain-water started leaking through the roof of the mosque at the praying place of the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam). I saw with my own eyes the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam) at the completion of the morning prayer leaving with his face covered with mud and water.

Yet there are so many traditions that indicate that Laylatul Qadr may be on the 24th, 25th or 27th of Ramadan. In general, we should observe it on all of the last ten days, for that is better for us as the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam) taught us in the previous tradition.

There is another Hadith that shows the spiritual importance of this blessed night: Narrated Abu Huraira (radhiallahohun 'anhu): I heard Allah's Apostle (sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam) saying regarding Ramadan, "Whoever prayed at night in it (Laylatul Qadr) out of sincere Faith and hoping for a reward from Allah subhana wa ta'ala, then all his previous sins will be forgiven."



How to Prepare for Ramadan

Strengthening “Iman” or “Faith”

It is absolutely critical for a Muslim to strengthen his/her iman prior to this month simply because the person with a weak iman will not take advantage of and attempt to reap as much reward as possible from this month as would someone with a strong iman.

Reading the Quran

Read the Quran and Hadith. Read Islamic literature written by Muslim Scholars.

Contemplation

Contemplate carefully about what you are reading. Realize there are deep meanings behind the words on the page.

Remembering Death and the Hereafter

Be more in touch with the realities of this world. Life as we know it is very short and temporary. Our real life begins in the Hereafter.

Make Many Supplications or Du'aa

If you want this to be your most productive Ramadan ever, then pray for it. Ask Allah subhana wa ta'ala for this blessed opportunity to worship, reap rewards, and become a better Muslim.

There was a group of people who lived shortly after the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam) who used to pray to Allah for entire six months before Ramadan that Allah gives them the opportunity to worship during this blessed month. During the six months after Ramadan they would pray that their acts of worship during Ramadan would be accepted.

Purifying the Heart of any Hatred or Ill-feelings One May have Towards Another Fellow Muslim

Now is the time to let go of any grudges one may have

One should learn about the specific rulings regarding acts of worship, i.e., praying, taraweeh, and Qiyam Al-Layl, giving charity, reciting the Quran, performing Umrah, anticipating the night of power, etc.

against others. Clear the heart of ill-feelings towards others and start a fresh, clean page with your fellow Muslims.

Purifying Ourselves

Sincerely repenting for our sins. For we would not like to

greet Ramadan in a state in which Allah subhana wa ta'ala is not pleased with us. Therefore receive Ramadan by purifying yourself and repenting for your sins.

Fasting During the Month of Shaban

On the authority of Aisha (radhiallaho anho) who reported that the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam) did not fast as frequently during any month as during

Shabaan. In another narration: He used to fast the greater part of Shabaan and give up for a few days. (*Bukhari and Muslim*)

Learn About the Acts of Worship During Ramadan

One should learn about the specific rulings regarding acts of worship, i.e., praying, taraweeh, and qiyam al-layl (staying up at night praying), giving charity, reciting the Quran, performing Umrah, anticipating the night of power, etc.

Setup a Program for Yourself During Ramadan

Set up a schedule for yourself for reading the Quran, giving Sadaqah and performing dhikr.

Prayer Schedule for Champaign / Urbana IL

Latitude = 40 2 N Longitude = 88 17 W
Zone Time = GMT - 6 Qiblah (From North) = 48 27'E
Ramadan 1418 H, December / January 1997 G

Date	Fajr	Shuruuq	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghrib	Isha
G Day H	Dawn	Sunrise	Noon	Aft'noon	Sunset	
Evening						
31 Wed 1	5:54	7:15	11:56	2:20	4:38	5:59
1 Thu 2	5:54	7:15	11:57	2:21	4:39	6:00
2 Fri 3	5:54	7:15	11:57	2:21	4:39	6:00
3 Sat 4	5:55	7:15	11:58	2:22	4:40	6:01
4 Sun 5	5:55	7:15	11:58	2:23	4:41	6:02
5 Mon 6	5:55	7:15	11:59	2:24	4:42	6:03
6 Tue 7	5:55	7:15	11:59	2:25	4:43	6:04
7 Wed 8	5:55	7:15	12:00	2:26	4:44	6:04
8 Thu 9	5:55	7:15	12:00	2:27	4:45	6:05
9 Fri 10	5:55	7:15	12:00	2:27	4:46	6:06
10 Sat 11	5:55	7:15	12:01	2:28	4:47	6:07
11 Sun 12	5:55	7:15	12:01	2:29	4:48	6:08
12 Mon 13	5:54	7:14	12:02	2:30	4:49	6:09
13 Tue 14	5:54	7:14	12:02	2:31	4:50	6:10
14 Wed 15	5:54	7:14	12:02	2:32	4:51	6:11
15 Thu 16	5:54	7:13	12:03	2:33	4:52	6:12
16 Fri 17	5:54	7:13	12:03	2:34	4:53	6:13
17 Sat 18	5:53	7:12	12:03	2:35	4:54	6:14
18 Sun 19	5:53	7:12	12:04	2:36	4:56	6:15
19 Mon 20	5:53	7:11	12:04	2:37	4:57	6:16
20 Tue 21	5:52	7:11	12:04	2:38	4:58	6:17
21 Wed 22	5:52	7:10	12:05	2:39	4:59	6:18
22 Thu 23	5:51	7:10	12:05	2:40	5:00	6:19
23 Fri 24	5:51	7:09	12:05	2:41	5:01	6:20
24 Sat 25	5:50	7:08	12:05	2:42	5:03	6:21
25 Sun 26	5:50	7:08	12:06	2:43	5:04	6:22
26 Mon 27	5:49	7:07	12:06	2:44	5:05	6:23
27 Tue 28	5:48	7:06	12:06	2:45	5:06	6:24
28 Wed 29	5:48	7:05	12:06	2:46	5:07	6:25
29 Thu 30	5:47	7:05	12:06	2:47	5:09	6:26