



FASTING

الصوم

JURISPRUDENCE

LEVEL 3

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand the obligation of fasting and the rewards of fasting
- Learn the following invalidators of fasting:
 - eating
 - drinking
 - immersing the head under water
 - intentional vomiting
 - inhaling thick dust
 - masturbation
 - remaining in Janabah or Hayḍ
- Know that eating or drinking forgetfully does not break the fast
- Know that if a person's health is being harmed by fasting, they should not fast
- Discuss that only deliberate actions require Kaffarah, whereas Qaḍa is for almost any breaking of the fast
- Be introduced to the rule that fasts missed in one Ramaḍan must be made up before the next Ramaḍan comes around if possible
- Know the categories of people who are exempt from fasting
- Revise the Islamic months highlighting the Ash-hurul Ḥurum
- Be introduced to the very basic rules of moon-sighting
- Be introduced to the categories of people who are exempt from fasting

Fasting: Part I

Fasting is one of the most important acts of worship in Islam. It is obligatory during the month of Ramaḍan. It is one of the best ways of coming closer to Allah (SWT). As we will see, fasting is not just keeping away from food and drink; rather it is the most sincere acts of worship which has degrees and levels.

FASTING: AN OBLIGATION UPON THE BELIEVERS

“O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you that you may attain self-restraint.”(2:183)

Fasting has been made Wājib on the believing men and women. This means that as soon as we have reached the age of responsibility we must fast. Fasting is an act of worship done **for the sake of God**, where we need to keep away from anything that breaks the fastⁱ (food, water etc.) from the time of Fajr until Maghrib. Fasting has such an importance in Islam that Imam Al-Bāqir (as) refers to it as one of the five pillars of Islam.ⁱⁱ

One of the most important prerequisites for the acceptance of the fast is that one makes the intention. One should make the intention of fasting to be completely for the sake of Allah (SWT). This means it should not be done for the sake of others acknowledging that you are fasting, or for your parents to be pleased with you. Your fast should be done to seek the pleasure of the Creator.

THE INTENTION TO FAST

The time for the intention of the obligatory fast is specific. One can make the intention either:

- 1- Before the beginning of Fajr for every morning that you are fasting.
- 2- At the beginning of the month of Ramaḍān where we can make the intention to fast for every single day of the month.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INTENTION

The act of fasting is almost completely based on the intention. This is because fasting could be described as the most sincere act of worshipping. When we compare fasting with other acts of worship we begin to see the sincerity within it. Look at prayer. When we pray, there could be some ulterior motives to impress the people around us (God forbid). However, when someone is fasting, no one knows if you are in fact fasting. Especially when living in a Non-Muslim country, someone can pretend to be fasting, while secretly eating. However, the one who fasts and completes it has a special status in the eyes of Allah (SWT), because he is doing it completely for the sake of God.

It is for this reason that in a Ḥadīth Qudsi it is narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq (as), that Allah (SWT) says:

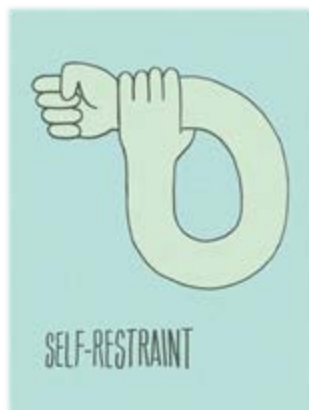
“For every good deed that you do there is an allocated reward, as for fasting, I am the reward for it.”

The reward with Allah (SWT) is something that we cannot even begin to imagine.

BENEFITS OF FASTING:

TAQWA [SELF-RESTRAINT]

One of the main benefits of fasting according to the verse that we began with, is that it helps us learn self-restraint. When we are fasting, we are controlling some of our biggest desires, such as food and water. Usually, we cannot live without these, but on these special days we train ourselves to keep away from that which we love.



Through keeping away from the basic necessity of life, food, we can then train our souls to keep away from what is forbidden to us. Thus, if someone fasts, yet does not witness any improvements in his actions, then there is a serious question as to whether his fasts were accepted by Allah (SWT).

BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION:

When someone has a bad habit, it is very difficult to stop this bad habit, to the extent that Imam Ṣādiq (as) refers to this change as a miracle. The month of Ramaḍān, for this reason, is a month filled with miracles.

Automatically our behaviour is modified, as something as basic as our eating habits change. In particular there is one behaviour which we can develop in ourselves during the month of Ramaḍān, and that is patience.

Unfortunately, a lot of us fail when it comes to this critical test. When we become angry, we seem to forget our self-control. Patience is certainly a character which is honoured and placed in such a high place in Islam.

So, if we want to truly take advantage of the month of Ramaḍān, we should take this trait of patience. Some of us might find that we are automatically more patient in the month of Ramaḍān. This means that we are benefiting from this month.

HEALTH BENEFITS:

The Prophet (saw) says:

“Fast, you will be healthy.”

There are more than 500 medical journals on therapeutic fasting; that argue that so many diseases may be cured through fasting. When we refrain from eating and drinking, there is a decomposition of damaged cells and tissues throughout the day.

SHARING AND CARING

For what reason did Allah (SWT) make fasting compulsory?

Imam Ḥassan Al-‘Askari explains:

“So that the rich shall experience the pangs of hunger and they have mercy upon the poor.”

We know that starvation and its related diseases cause one person per second to die on this planet, 75% of them being infants and children under the age of 5. The reason that there are hungry people is because there are people with stuffed bellies. Australians are throwing more than 3 million tonnes of food a year mostly because of over shopping and waste at the table. Meanwhile, more than half of American adults (20+) are overweight. Nearly ¼ of American adults are obese. Americans spend \$33 billion annually on weight loss products & services.

Through fasting we begin to be aware of the extravagance in our consumption and feel the suffering of others, that we may be aware and change our spending habits.

Review Questions

Q1. The intention to fast:

- Must be made every morning before Fajr
- Can be made at the beginning of the month of Ramadan to fast the whole month
- Does not need to be made

Q2. During the month of Ramaḍān:

- We should not change anything in our life
- We should try to change our bad habits to good ones
- It is impossible to change habits

Q3. Fasting:

- Is unhealthy
- Has many health benefits
- Is neither healthy nor unhealthy

Fasting: Part II

In our last lesson, we learnt about the importance of fasting and how we can benefit from fasting. In this lesson, we will discuss the main rules of fasting and learn about which things break our fast.

WHAT BREAKS THE FAST?

There are nine things that can break a person's fast. However, in this lesson, we will talk about the main ones that you might come across. When a person is fasting, they cannot do these things between dawn (fajr) and Maghreb. If they do these things, their fast is not

counted, except in certain situations that we will discuss later.

EATING AND DRINKING

As we know by now, we are not allowed to eat or drink while we are fasting. If a person eats or drinks on purpose then their fast is not counted.

CAN I BRUSH MY TEETH?

Yes you can brush when you're fasting as long as you don't swallow the toothpaste or the water. Remember also that if you swallow the bits of food left between your teeth on purpose then this also breaks the fast.

IMMERSING THE HEAD UNDER WATER

When a person is fasting, they are not allowed to duck their whole head under water. However, they are allowed to go under the shower.

If you plan on swimming in the month of Ramaḍān, be very careful about this rule and make sure you do not duck your head under water. If you think that you will not be able to avoid this, then you should not go swimming.

INHALING THICK DUST

If there is thick dust around and a person breathes this dust in, then their fast is broken. An example of thick dust is if a strong wind blows thick particles of soil towards a person, or if a person is sweeping or dusting and thick dust is blown towards them. Other examples include cigarette smoke or the smoke from the exhaust of a truck.

INTENTIONAL VOMITING

If a person vomits on purpose, this breaks their fast. However, if a person vomits without meaning to (for example if they are ill) then their fast is not broken.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

There are some special situations where things they usually break the fast do not do so:

- If a person does something forgetfully. For example, if a person takes a bite of food or drinks a glass of water because they forgot they were fasting, their

fast is still okay. They need to stop as soon as they remember and continue fasting.

- If a person's health is harmed because of fasting, or a person is reasonably scared that their health would be harmed by fasting, then they have to break their fast and eat and drink until they are safe from that harm. However, later, when they feel better, they need to make up that fast.



Review Questions

Q1. Breathing in thick dust on purpose:

- a. Breaks the fast
- b. Does not affect the fast
- c. Sometimes breaks the fast

Q2. Vomiting:

- a. Always breaks the fast
- b. Only breaks the fast if it is done on purpose
- c. Never breaks the fast

Q3. Taking a shower:

- a. Is not allowed while fasting
- b. Is okay as long as one does not duck their whole head under water at the same time

Fasting: Part III

In previous lessons, we have learnt some of the rules of fasting. In this lesson, we will learn some further rules regarding fasting. Firstly, we will discuss which people are excused from fasting during the month of Ramaḍān, and then we will discuss some of the rules of moon-sighting.

MAKING UP MISSED FASTS

The first important thing to remember is that if a person misses a fast during the month of Ramaḍān, they need to make it up by fasting another day during the year. Even if they had a valid excuse for not fasting (e.g. important travel or illness), they still need to make it up later if they become able to do so. It is important to make up the missed fasts from the previous month of Ramaḍān before the next month of Ramaḍān comes around.

PEOPLE WHO ARE EXCUSED FROM FASTING

As we have learnt so far, the rules of Islam are very merciful and do not mean to cause hardship for anyone. Another example of the merciful nature of the laws of Islam is that certain people are excused from fasting because this would cause them too much hardship. The following people are excused:

- A person who is ill and whose illness makes fasting very difficult or whose illness may become more severe because of fasting
- A person who cannot fast because of old age
- A person who cannot fast because it would cause them great hardship.
- A person who has a disease causing excessive thirst
- A woman who is in the late stages of her pregnancy, or who might be harmed or harm her child by fasting
- A woman who is breastfeeding and would not be able to breastfeed adequately if she was fasting

So you can see that Allah (SWT) does not want any of His creatures to be harmed or go through great hardship because of any act of worship. This is a rule that you should always remember for all acts of worship. If an act of worship will cause you or others harm, then you are not allowed to perform that act of worship. If it is possible, an alternative action should be performed or you should perform Qaḍā' for that action later when you are able.

MOON-SIGHTING

As we have learnt in previous lessons, the months of the Islamic calendar are based on the moon and its phases. An Islamic month begins when we can first see the crescent moon in the sky, and continues over the cycle of the moon until it disappears. When it reappears again, this is the sign for the beginning of the next month.

Therefore, to know when a month of the Islamic calendar begins, we need to see whether we can see the moon in the sky or not.

We learnt that we should go out to look at the sky and see whether we can see the crescent moon of Ramaḍān.

If we are able to see it, or other reliable people are able to see it, then we can assume the next day is the first of the month of Ramaḍān.

The same rules apply at the end of the month of Ramaḍān, when we are trying to work out when the month of Shawwāl begins so that we can celebrate 'Īd.

It is important to remember a couple of things about the beginning or end of the month of Ramaḍān:

- Some scholars have different views on the rules of sighting the moon, this does not mean any of them are wrong because they have all reached their decision in a professional and objective way by applying their ijtihād
- People within the same community might celebrate 'Īd on different days because they follow different scholars. Again, this does not mean anyone is wrong, and should not be something that we fight about. We should try to maintain unity and good relations between ourselves no matter what.



THE MONTHS OF THE ISLAMIC CALENDAR

In previous years, we have learnt the names of the twelve months in the Islamic calendar, and the names of the four sacred months (Ash-hurul Ḥurum). Let us revise these with the following activities.

ORDER	MONTH
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	

Review Questions

Q1. The day of 'Īd is the first day of the month of:

- Ramaḍān
- Shawwāl
- Rajab

Q2. Different scholars may have different rules on sighting the moon. This means:

- Some of them are wrong
- Some of them are less knowledgeable
- this does not mean any of them are wrong because they have all reached their decision in a professional and objective way by applying their ijtihād

Q3. An elderly person who is weak and frail:

- Still has to fast
- Does not have to fast
- Should get someone else to fast on their behalf

ⁱ List of the things that break fast.

ⁱⁱ In Al-Kafi, Imam Al-Baqir: The religion is built on five pillars Salaat, Zakaat, Fasting, Hajj and Wilayat.