

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Fasting In a Nutshell

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All praise is due to Allah, the *Rabb* of the creation; and may Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his honourable household and all his companions.

To proceed:

These are brief notes on fasting (in Ramadhaan), its ruling and the different categories of people in regards to it, plus additional beneficial points. This is presented in a summarized format.

- Fasting is to worship Allah, The Exalted, by refraining from everything that nullifies the fast, from the break of dawn until sunset.
- Observing the fast during the month of Ramadhaan is one of the great five Pillars of Islam. The Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allah upon him*) said:

“Islam has been built upon five pillars: to testify that there is no god worthy of being worshipped except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, to establish the Salaah, give the Zakat, to observe *Saum* (the fast) during Ramadhan and to perform Hajj to the Sacred House.” (Bukhari and Muslim)

The Different Categories of People in Regard to Fasting:

- 1- Fasting (in Ramadhaan) is obligatory upon every Muslim who has reached puberty, is sane, able, and is a present resident (not travelling).
- 2- The disbeliever does not fast, and he/she is not required to make up the missed fasts after embracing Islaam.
- 3- Youth who have not yet reached puberty, are not obliged to fast, but should be encouraged so that they become accustomed to it.
- 4- The insane (mentally incapable), even if they are adults, are not obliged to fast, nor is it an obligation to feed the poor on their behalf. Likewise, this ruling applies to anyone who cannot distinguish between right and wrong due to senility and dementia.
- 5- The one who is (physically) incapable of fasting due to a permanent reason; such as old age, or a disease that they do not expect to recover from, should feed a poor person for every missed day.
- 6- Anyone who becomes sick and expects to recover from his illness should break his fast; if it is difficult for him to fast. However, he must make up for the missed days, once he recovers from his illness.
- 7- Pregnant and breastfeeding women should break their fast, if it is difficult for them to fast due to pregnancy or breastfeeding, or if they fear that fasting will be harmful to their babies. They must make up the days they missed, once it is easy for them, and there is no fear of their babies being harmed by them fasting¹.

¹ This position is based on likening their condition to that of the ill person or the traveller. Other scholars hold that the correct position is that if fasting is too difficult for the pregnant or nursing woman, or she fears that it will induce harm to herself or to the health of her baby; **she should not fast and must feed a poor person for each missed day, without having to make up fasts for the missed days.** Their evidence is that this is the position held by Ibn Abbaas (*may Allah be pleased with both of them*), and there is no definite and decisive evidence that mandates her to make up for the days that she missed. Furthermore, it is not known that any of the Companions disagreed with Ibn Abbaas (*may Allah be pleased with both of them*) on this issue, and Allah knows best. For details, including the main references, see: the Shaykh's *Sharh al-Mumte'*, vol. 6, Pp. 348-350.

8- The woman who is experiencing her menses or postnatal bleeding must not fast during these periods, and must make up for the missed days.

9- The person who is forced to break his fast so that he may be able to save someone. For example; someone who is drowning or caught in a fire, does so, and then makes up for that missed day.

10- Travellers have the option of fasting, or breaking the fast and making it up later on. This holds true whether the journey is occasional, like travelling to perform Umrah, or more constant travel, such as that of taxi or truck drivers. Travellers can break their fast if they want to, as long as they are out of their towns.

The Things that Do Not Nullify the Fast:

- If the fasting person consumes anything that normally breaks the fast, forgetfully, or unknowingly, or is forced to do so, then his fast is still valid.

Allah the Almighty said:

رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِنْ نَسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا

“Our Lord! Do not hold us unto account if we forget or fall into error.” (2:286)

And He said:

إِلَّا مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ

“... Except him who is forced thereto and whose heart is at rest with Faith.” (16: 106)

And He said:

وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا أَخْطَأْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَكِنْ مَا تَعَمَّدَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ

“And there is no blame or sin on you concerning that in which you made a mistake, but there is in regards to what your hearts deliberately intend.” (33:5)

* So if the fasting person forgetfully eats or drinks, his fast is not nullified by that because he forgot.

* And if he ate or drank believing that the sun had already set, or that dawn had not yet shown in the horizon, then his fast won't be nullified because he was unaware.

* And if he rinsed his mouth out and some water entered into his throat, unintentionally, again his fast is not nullified because he didn't do it deliberately.

* And if he had a wet dream in his sleep, his fast will still be valid, because this is involuntarily.

The Eight Things that Nullify the Fast:

1. Sexual Intercourse: If it is done during the day in Ramadhaan, by someone who is obligated to fast then he has to make a great expiation along with making up that day. The expiation is to free a slave. If he can't find one to free or is not capable, then he has to fast for two consecutive months. And if he not even capable of doing this, then he has to feed sixty poor people.

2. Ejaculation while one is awake through masturbation, hugging, kissing, fondling, etc.

3. Eating or drinking, whether the thing consumed is useful or harmful, like cigarettes.

4. Injection of nourishment that may substitute for food, because it constitutes as consuming food and drink. But the injections that do not provide nourishment do not break the fast whether they are injected into the muscles or the veins; and whether the injected person finds its taste in his throat or not.

5. Injection of blood (blood transfusion); for instance someone who loses blood and is injected with blood to replace the blood that was lost.

6. Menstruation and postnatal bleeding.

7. The extraction of blood by means of cupping (*Hijaamah*), and similar means. However, if blood comes out, by itself, such as nasal bleeding or tooth extraction, and likewise, then this does not break the fast; for this is neither cupping nor implied in its meaning.

8. Deliberately vomiting. If it is unintentional, it does not break the fast.

Some Points of Benefit:

1/ It is permissible for the fasting person to intend to fast, while being in a state of *Janaabah* (sexual impurity) and then he may purify himself by making *ghusl* after the break of dawn.

2/ If a woman, in Ramadhaan, becomes clean and free of her menses or post-natal bleeding before the break of dawn, she must fast, even if she doesn't take a *ghusl*, until after dawn.

3/ It is permissible for the one who is observing the fast to have his wisdom tooth or other teeth extracted, and to treat his wound, and to use nose or eye drops. And this will not break his fast even if he senses the taste of the drops in his throat.

4/ It is permissible for him who is observing the fast to clean his teeth with a *miswaak* at the beginning of the day and at the end of it. This is a *sunnah* while fasting, just as it is while not fasting.

5/ It is also permissible for the fasting person to do that which lessens the severity of heat and thirst, like cooling off by washing his body with water or using an air conditioner.

6/ Also the fasting person can spray into his mouth what which alleviates for him the shortness of breath caused by pressure or something else.²

²Editor's Note: An example of this is asthma medication, providing that none of it reaches the stomach. See "*Fataawah Arkaanul-Islaam*" by the Shaykh (pg. 475)

7/ It is permissible for the fasting person to wet his lips with water if they became dry or to rinse his mouth with water if it dries, without gargling (due to the risk of swallowing the water).

8/ It is *sunnah* for the fasting person to delay the *Sabour* (pre-dawn meal) until just before *Fajr* (dawn) and to be hasty to break his fast, immediately after sunset. He should break his fast (*Iftaar*) with fresh ripe-dates, if that is not available, then with dry dates, and if that is not available, then with water, if even that is not available, then with any *Halal* (lawful) food. However, if nothing at all is available, then he should intend in his heart that he has broken his fast until he finds something.

9/ It is *sunnah* for a fasting person to do many acts of obedience and to keep away from all prohibitions.

10/ The fasting person must adhere to the obligatory deeds and keep away from all that is illegal. He should pray the five prayers at their specific times and perform them in congregation, (if he is of those who are required to do so). He must abstain from telling lies, backbiting, cheating, dealings involving usury/interest, and avoid every evil deed or saying that Allah has prohibited. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Whoever does not refrain from evil speech and acting in accordance to it, and ignorance, Allah has no need for him to refrain from food and drink”. (Al-Bukhari)

And all the praise is due to Allah the *Rabb* of the creation, and may Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his honourable household and all his Companions.

Written by his eminence, **His Eminence Shaikh Muhammad bin Saalih Al-Uthaimeen** (*rahimahullah*) on Sha’ban the 16th 1401 (H).

