

RAMADAN AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

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1. MONTH OF RAMADAN

a. Definition

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar.

Is the month when the Qur`aan was revealed for the whole human kind as a guidance from their creator.

In this month we have a night of power (LialatulQadar) where angels come down to earth and listen to the du`a of the Momins.

This is the month we have virtues like fasting, Taraweeh, Etikaaf, LialatulQadar, Zakat-ul-Fitar and Eid prayers.

b. Ramadan in the Quraan

The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Quraan, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong). So whoever of you sights the month, he must observe Saum (fasts) that month, and whoever is ill or a on a journey, the same number [of days which one did not observe Saum (fasts) must be made up] from other days, Allah intends for you ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you. (He wants that you) must complete the same number (of days), and that you must magnify Allah for having guided you so that you may be grateful to Him. (Surah Al-Baqarah 2: V. 185)

c. Ramadan in Ahadiths

Narrated Abu Hurairah (RA): Allah's Messenger (saw) said, "When the month of Ramadan starts, the gates of the heaven are opened and the gates of Hell are closed and the devils are chained." (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

2. FASTING

a. Definition

Fasting literally means abstaining. In Islamic terminology, fasting is a kind of worship to Allah (SWT) in which every Muslim obeys Him and abstains from all things that nullify the validity of the fast from dawn to sunset. There are certain things that invalidate the fast, such as eating, drinking, intimate relation with one's wife, etc. However, although these things are normally permissible, they are forbidden while

fasting. Therefore, fasting is the act of one seeking the Pleasure of Allah (SWT), adhering to His Order to abstain from such restricted things from dawn to sunset.

b. Fasting in the Quraan

O you who believe! Observing As-Saum (the fasting) is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become Al-Muttaqin (the pious). (Suraah Al-Baqarah 2: V. 183)

Observing Saum (fasts) for a fixed number of days, but if any of you are ill or on a journey, the same number (should be made up) from other days. And as for those who can fast with difficulty, , they have (a choice either to fast or) to feed a Miskin (poor person). But whoever does good of his own accord, it is better for him. And that you fast is better for you if only you know. (Suraah Al-Baqarah 2: V. 184)

c. Fasting in the Ahadiths

i.) Islam is based on five (pillars): testifying to the fact that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah (SWT) and that Muhammad (saw) is Allah’s Messenger; the establishment of the ritual prayer; the payment of Zakat; performing Hajj (pilgrimage) to the House of Allah (Kabah); and fasting during the month of Ramada.” (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

ii.) Narrated Abu Hurairah (RA): Allah’s Messenger (saw) said, “Saum (fasting) is a shield (or a screen or a shelter from the Hell-fire). So, the person observing Saum (fast) should avoid intimate relation with his wife and should not behave foolishly and impudently, and if somebody fights with him or abuses him, he should say to him twice, ‘I am observing Saum (fast).’ “ The Prophet (saw) added, “By Him in Whose Hands my soul is, the smell coming out from the mouth of a person observing Saum (fast) is better with Allah (SWT) than the smell of musk. (Allah says about the fasting person), ‘He has left his food, drink and desires for My sake. The Saum (fast) is for Me. So I will reward (the fasting person) for it and the reward of good deeds is multiplied ten times.” (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

iii.) Narrated Abu Hurairah (RA): Allah’s Messenger (saw) said, “Whoever observes Saum (fast) during the month of Ramadan out of sincere faith, and hoping to attain Allah’s Rewards, then all his past sins will be forgiven.” (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

d. The Essential Elements of the Fasting

i.) Niyyah (Intention)

In the case of the obligatory fast, the intention must be made the night before the fast begins. Allah’s Messenger (saw) said:

“Whoever does not determine to fast before the dawn, his fasting is null and void.”
(Ahmad and the Four Sunan Compilers)

Every Muslim must make his intention at night to observe his fasting from early morning the next day, in addition to taking his pre-dawn meal (Suhoor). The Meaning of the intention is that he is determined to fast the next day. Such intention need not be spoken aloud, as it is in reality an act of the heart, which does not involve the tongue. Additionally, there are no narrations stating that the Prophet (saw) uttered the intention aloud. Some textual wordings for the above intention are printed in some of the traditional calendars such as:

“I intended to observe tomorrow’s fasting for the month of Ramadan”

These are categorically baseless and authentically groundless. Therefore, the uses of such audible wordings are innovations, since it is not confirmed from the Prophet (saw).

ii.) Duration of Fast

Its duration is from Dawn to sunset. Before the dawn (Fajr) one has to take his pre-dawn meal (Suhoor) and abstain from everything that invalidates the fast until sunset.

“And eat and drink until the white thread (light) of dawn appears to you distinct from the black thread (darkness of night), then complete your Saum (fast) till the nightfall..... (Surrah Al-Baqarah- 2: V. 187)

iii.) Suhoor (Pre-Dawn meal)

Some people are not serious about the pre-dawn meal, since either they have an adequate dinner at night before going for a deep sleep, or they have a meal during the middle of the night. Either choice is wrong. Allah’s Messenger (saw) said:

“The difference between our fasting and that of the People of the Scriptures is the Suhoor (Pre-dawn meal).” (Muslim)

iv.) Hasten in breaking the Fast

Hastening in breaking the fast without delay is the Sunnah of the Prophet (saw), hastening means to break the fast immediately after sunset without any further delay.

v.) How to break the Fast

We have to adopt a more moderate and comfortable way of breaking our fast by which a rich reward in the Hereafter and a physical advantage in this world also be achieved.

Narrated Anas: “Allah’s Messenger (saw) used to break his fast before offering Maghrib (sunset) prayer with three fresh dates; if there were no fresh dates, he would eat three dry dates; and if there were no dry dates, he would take three draughts of water.” (Abu Dawud)

vi.) Supplication (Du'a) upon breaking the Fast

According to Sunnah of the Prophet (saw) the below given supplication (du'a) is recommended:

Dhahabaz-zamau wabtallatil-'uruq, wa tahabata lajru, in sha' Allah

The thirst is gone, and the veins replenished, and the reward is confirmed, if Allah (SWT) wills).

vii.) Reward for helping others to break their Fast

The rich reward of helping others to break their fast can be achieved according to one's best ability, and it is not required for people to overburden themselves in this regard.

Allah's Messenger (saw) said:

He who provides a fasting person something with which to break his fast, and he who equips a fighter (in the way of Allah with arms, etc.) will earn the same reward as the one who was doing it." (At-Tirmidhi)

viii.) Shunning Evil Deeds

Laghw and Rafath are prohibited for the fasting person. Therefore, everyone must refrain from all of the above-mentioned deeds. Similarly, whoever attempts to quarrel, dispute, utter obscenities and foul words, or is harshly abusive, and then a fasting person must show perseverance and patience towards such evil doer. A fasting person must abstain from arguments, disputes and hostilities, and face those situations with a polite and moderate composure.

Allah's Messenger (saw) said:

"Fasting is not just (abstaining from) eating and drinking, but fasting is also (refraining) from vain speech (Laghw) and foul (or obscene) language (Rafath). If one of you is being verbally abused or annoyed, he should say" "I am fasting." (Al-Bayhaqi in his Sunan)

d. Actions that void the Fast

i.) Intentional eating or drinking: is among the things that invalidate the fast. Meanwhile, if somebody eats or drinks forgetfully, then he should complete his fasting.

Allah's Messenger (saw) said: "If somebody eats or drinks forgetfully, then he should complete his fasting, for what he has eaten or drank, has actually been given to him by Allah (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

ii.) Intentional Vomiting: If a fasting person intentionally vomits, his fasting will be void. However, if one unintentionally vomits, his fast is valid. Allah's Messenger (saw) said):

“Whoever is overcome and vomits is not to make up for the day, and whoever vomits intentionally must make up for the day.” (Four Sunan Compilers)

iii.) Intimate relation with the wife: If a fasting person purposefully has intimate relation, his fast will be null and void and he must make up for the day later, as well as paying the expiation for it. This expiation is to free a slave, observe fast for two successive months, or feed sixty of the poor. (Al-Bukhari & Muslim)

iv.) Menstruation and post-childbirth bleeding: invalidate the fast.

v.) Purposeful discharge of semen: invalidates one's fast. Unintentional discharge, which occurs by a wet dream, will not invalidate the fast, because this action is something beyond one's control and choice, contrary to the former case.

e. Actions that does not void the Fast

i.) It is permissible to observe fasting after taking one's pre-dawn meal while one is in a state of (janabat) impurity. However, it is imperative that such person take a full bath to offer the prayer. Narrated Aishah (RA)

“Allah's Messenger (saw) would wake up at Fajr (dawn) in a state of (janabat) impurity after having intercourse with his wives. So, he would then take a bath and observe fasting.” (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

ii.) It is allowed to clean the mouth using the Miswak (tooth-stick). Allah's Messenger (saw) said:

“Had I not found it difficult for my Ummah (nation), I would have ordered them to use the Miswak (tooth-stick) before every prayer. (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

iii.) It is permissible to kiss one's wife while fasting as well as to embrace her. Narrate Aishah (RA)

“Allah's Messenger (saw) used to kiss and fondle while he was fasting, but he was the one among you who had the most self-control over his desire.” (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

iv.) Testing the taste of the food out of the pot or meals is allowed for the fasting person, if he does not swallow the food, allowing it to enter the throat. Similarly, it is permissible to place medicine on one's tooth. Ibn 'Abbas (RA) said:

“There is no harm in tasting the food in the pots or other things.” (Al-Bukhari)

3. TARAWEEH

a.) Taraweeh is absolutely voluntary prayer by which a true believer really intends to attain the Pleasure of Allah (SWT) and approach Him. But what is really happening in the mosques? People are used to reciting the holy Quraan in their Taraweeh prayer in a quick non-stop fashion, including the Ruku, Sujud, and standing positions. How can one expect to achieve the pleasure and closeness of Allah (SWT) if we deform the structure of the prayer and trifle with the beautiful Quraanic recitation in the night prayer?

b.) It is well understood that this prayer was known as the ‘Night Prayer’ (Qiyam-ul-Lail) or (Tahajjud) during the days of the Prophet (saw) and his Companions. Its duration is from the conclusion of ‘Isha (evening) prayer until the commencement of the Fajr (dawn) prayer. In other words, it is allowed to offer the Night Prayer at any time in between the above prescribed schedule.

c.) Due to extensive and lengthy duration, the Night Prayer is normally offered immediately after the ‘Isha (evening) prayer so that the maximum number of people can partake of this virtuous prayer during the blessed month of Ramadan and attain its merits and rewards. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to observe this Night Prayer in congregation, which is easier and more comfortable than offering it individually.

d.) Later, the Night Prayer during Ramadan became known as the Taraweeh prayer. However, the Taraweeh prayer is neither among the particular advantages of Ramadan nor is it to be offered only on the nights of Ramadan. Rather it is a night prayer (Qiyam-ul-Lail or Tahajjud) which is to be offered on any night.

e.) How many Rak’at were performed by the Prophet (saw) during his Night Prayer or Tahajjud prayer? ‘Aishah (RA) narrated the answer to this question clearly (as related in Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim) saying that it was eight Rak’at excluding the Witr prayer, or eleven Rak’at along with the Witr prayer, She said:

“Allah’s Messenger (saw) never offered more than eleven Rak’at, in Ramadan, or in other months.” (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

4. LAILATULQADR

a. Qur`aan on LailatulQadr

“And Allah (SWT) said: Verily! We have sent it (this Quraan) down in the night of Al-Qadr (Decree). And what will make you know what the night of Qadr is....” (V. 97: 1,2)

b. Ahadiths on LailatulQadar

i.) Narrated Abu Huraira (RA) The Prophet (saw) said, “Whoever observed Saum (fast) in the month of Ramadan with sincere faith (i.e. belief) and hoping for a reward from Allah (SWT) then all his past sins will be forgiven, and whoever stood for the Salat (prayers) in the night of Qadr with sincere faith and hoping for a reward from Allah (SWT), then all his previous sins will be forgiven.

To look for the night of Qadr in the last seven nights of Ramadan

ii.) Narrated Ibn ‘Umar (RA) some men amongst the Companions of the Prophet (saw) were shown in their dreams that the night of Qadr was in the last seven nights of Ramadan. Allah’s Messenger (saw) said, “It seems that all your dreams agree that (the Night of Qadr) is in the last seven nights, and whoever wants to search for it (i.e. the Night of Qadr) should search in the last seven (nights of Ramadan)

To search for the Night of Qadr in the odd nights of the last ten nights (of Ramadan). This narration has come from ‘Ubada (bin As-Samit) on the authority of the Prophet (saw)

iii.) Narrated Aisha (RA) Allah’s Messenger (saw) said, “Search for the Night of Qadr in the odd nights of the last ten nights of Ramadan.” (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

The doing of good deeds in the last ten days of Ramadan.

iv.) Narrated Aisha (RA) with the start of the last ten days of Ramadan, the Prophet (saw) used to tighten his waist belt (i.e., work hard) and used to offer Salat (prayer) all the night, and used to keep his family awake for the Salat. (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

5. ETIKAAF

a. Qur`aan on Etikaaf

The Etikaaf in the last ten days of Ramadan. And Etikaaf may be practiced in any mosque, as is evident in the Statement of Allah (SWT) “..... And do not have intimate relations with them (your wives); while you are in Etikaaf [i.e. to confine oneself in a mosque for Salat (prayer) and invocations leaving the worldly activities for a limited number of days] in the mosques. These are the limits (set) by Allah (SWT); so approach them not. Thus does Allah (SWT) make clear His Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lesions, signs, revelations, laws, legal and illegal things Allah’s set limits, orders etc.), to mankind that they may become Al-Muttaqun (the pious).” (V. 2: 187)

b. Ahadiths on Etikaaf

i.) Narrated ‘Abdullah bin Umar (RA) Allah’s Messenger (saw) used to practice Etikaaf in the last ten days of the month of Ramadan. (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

ii.) Narrated Aisha (RA) the wife of the Prophet (saw): The Prophet (saw) used to practice Etikaaf in the last ten days of Ramadan till he died and then his wives used to practice Etikaaf after him. (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

6. ZAKAT –UL-FITR

a. Meaning

Zakat-ul-Fitr is charity which is obligatory on every Muslim, it is called Fitr charity.

Zakat-ul-Fitr is obligatory on every Muslim, slave or free, man or woman, minor or major. One who was fasting or not, one who possesses Nisab (minimum standard) or not.

Ibne Umar (RA) transmits that the Messenger of Allah (saw) has prescribed on saa (2 ½ kg) of dates or maize as Zakat-ul-Fitr for each Muslim, slave or free, man or woman, minor or major. (Sahih Bukhar & Muslim)

b. Purpose

The object of providing Zakt-ul-Fitr is to cleanse oneself of sins committed in the state of fasting.

c. Due Time

It has to be given before leaving for the Ramadhan Eid prayers. Otherwise it will count as ordinary charity.

The Time to distribute Zakat-ul-Fitr charity commences after breaking the last fast, but it can also be done a day or two before the Eid.

The head of the family should distribute Zakat-ul-Fitr on behalf of all the members of his household such as wife, children and servants.

Naafe (RA) transmits: Ibne Umar (RA) distributed Zakat-ul-Fitr charity on behalf of the members, young and old, of his household and even on behalf of my sons. Ibne Umar (RA) distributed it among people who accepted it and it was a day or two before Eid-ul-Fitr. (Sahih Bukhari)

d. Amount

The quantity of Zakat-ul-Fitr is one ‘saa’ which is equivalent to two and a half kilograms per head.

e. Recipient

Those who are entitled to receive Zakat are the same people that deserve to be given Zakat-ul-Fitr (Surah Al-Tubah 9: V. 60)

f. Distribution

Zakat-ul-Fitr may be distributed preferable in the shape of grains. It should be distributed out of such commodities as are in daily use like wheat, rice, maize, date, raisin or cheese.

Abu Saeed Khudri (RA) relates: We used to distribute as Fitr charity any one of the above items in the measure of one 'saa' or 2 ½ kg per head. (Bukhari & Muslim)

“We wish you a prosperous Ramadan, May ALLAH (swt) showers his mercy on the whole Muslim Ummah”