

The Obligation of Fasting Ramadhaan

Fasting the month of Ramadhaan is obligatory according to the Book of Allah, the sunnah and consensus of the community. It is one of the five pillars of Islam. Allah has said,

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ
مِّنَ الْهُدَى وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ

“Ramadhaan is the (month) in which was sent down the Quran, as a guide to mankind, also clear (signs) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting” (*al-Baqarah* 185). And the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ شَهَادَةِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا
رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ وَالْحَجِّ الْبَيْتِ وَصَوْمِ
رَمَضَانَ

“Islam is built upon five [pillars]: testifying that there is none worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishing the prayers, giving the zakaat, making the pilgrimage to the House and fasting the month of Ramadhaan.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

Topic One:

Conditions Related to Fasting

The Conditions Requiring One to Fast

[These conditions are the following:]

- (1) Being Muslim.
- (2) Being adult.
- (3) Being sane.
- (4) Having the ability to fast.

The Essential Components of the Fast

[The essential components of the fast are:]

(1) The intention: this is the determination of the heart to fast, to implement the command of Allah and to get closer to Allah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ

“Surely, all actions are but driven by intentions.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

(2) Refraining, meaning staying away, from the things that break the fast, which are eating, drinking and sexual intercourse.

(3) The proper time, that is, the daytime which is from dawn until sunset.

The Conditions for the Soundness of the Fast

[The conditions for the soundness of the fast are as follows:]

- (1) Being Muslim.
- (2) Having the intention during the nighttime [that is, before the arrival of the dawn of the day in which one is to fast].
- (3) Being sane.
- (4) Being of the age of discernment.
- (5) No menstrual blood flowing.
- (6) No post-partum blood flowing, as the soundness of the fast of a woman requires that she be pure of menses or post-partum bleeding.

Recommended Acts of the Fast

- (1) Breaking the fast promptly, that is one should break the fast as soon as it is certain that the sun has set.
- (2) Breaking the fast by eating fresh or dry dates or drinking water. The preferred of those is the first. It is also preferred to eat them in an odd number, three, five or seven.
- (3) Supplication at the time of breaking one's fast. One should say,

اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ صُومْتُ وَعَلَى رِزْقِكَ أَفْطَرْتُ فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ
السميع العليم

“O Allah, for You I have fasted and with sustenance from You do I break my fast. Accept from us [our fasting] for You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.” (Recorded by Abu Dawood.¹)

- (4) Having *sahoor*, which is the eating and drinking at the end of the night with the intention of fasting the next day.

¹ This hadith has a weak chain. See Saleem al-Hilaali, *Sabeeh Kitaab al-Adhkaar wa Dhaeefabu* (Madinah: Maktabah al-Ghurabaa al-Athariyyah, 1413 A.H.), vol. 1, p. 495.—JZ

(5) Delaying the *sahoor* until the final portion of the night [just before dawn].

Actions That are Disliked During the Fast

A number of acts are disliked because they may lead the person to do something that will ruin his fast, even though they in themselves do not break the fast. These are the following acts:

(1) Putting water well into the mouth and throat while rinsing as part of ablution.

(2) Kissing, as it sparks the desires that may lead one to break the fast by ejaculating or sexual intercourse, wherein one will have to atone for the act.

(3) Continually looking at one's spouse with desire.

(4) Thinking about sexual intercourse.

(5) Touching a woman with one's hand or touching her with one's body.

Topic Two:

Acceptable Excuses to Not Fast

(1) A woman on her menses or with post-partum bleeding is required to break her fast.

(2) A person who is needed to rescue another Muslim from death, such as drowning and so forth, [may break his or her fast].

(3) A traveler is permitted to shorten his prayers and it is sunnah for him to break his fast.

(4) An ill person who fears he will be harmed [by fasting may also break his fast].

(5) A traveling person who returns to his home during the daytime.

(6) A pregnant or milking mother [may break the fast] if she fears for herself or her child. If she breaks her fast fearing only for her child, the one financially responsible for her must feed a poor person for every day she did not fast. In either case, she must make up the days of not fasting later.

What Nullifies the Fast

The following acts nullify the fast:

- (1) Apostatizing from Islam.
- (2) Having the intention and determination to break the fast.
- (3) Having doubts about continuing the fast.
- (4) Intentionally vomiting.
- (5) Anal enemas or intravenous intake of foods.
- (6) Menstrual or post-partum bleeding.
- (7) Swallowing phlegm if it reaches all the way to the mouth.
- (8) Cupping [a medical practice meant to release blood from the body] for both the one being cupped and the one doing the cupping.
- (9) Ejaculation of sperm due to repeated looks.
- (10) Ejaculation of sperm or release of prostatic fluid due to kissing, touching, masturbation or touching in a manner less than sexual intercourse.
- (11) Anything which reaches to the stomach, throat or brain of fluids or other things.

Important Notes

Whoever has sexual intercourse during the daytime of Ramadhan must make up that day later and atone for his act, if such was done intentionally. If it was done out of forgetfulness, the fast is still valid and he does not have to make up the day later or atone for his deed.

If a woman is forced to have sexual intercourse during the daytime of Ramadhan or if she were ignorant or forgetful, then her fast is valid. If she were forced into doing that, she must only make the day up later. If she did that act willingly and intentionally, then she must make the day up and atone for her act.

The atonement for such an act is the following: The person must free a slave. If that is not feasible, he or she must fast two consecutive months. If they are not able to do that, they must feed sixty poor people. If they cannot do that, then they are absolved of any specific act of atonement.

If a person has intercourse with his wife but not in her sexual organ, then he must make up that day and repent to Allah [without the act of atonement].

It is recommended to make up the days of Ramadhan immediately and in successive days. If a person leaves those missed days until the following Ramadhan without any valid excuse for doing so, he must still make up those days but must in addition feed one poor person for every such day.

If a person dies while still having to perform fasts of an oath or a pilgrimage due to an oath, then his heirs should perform said act on his behalf.

Topic Four:

Itikaaf

Definition

Lexically, *itikaaf* (اعتكاف) implies remaining somewhere, continuance, place and confinement. Legally, it means the staying and remaining in the mosque for the purpose

of worship, with a specific intention to perform the act in a specific manner.

The Wisdom Behind Its Being Sanctioned

Itikaaf allows the heart to be free of the affairs of the world and to concentrate itself upon the worship of Allah and His remembrance.

By this act, the soul submits itself to its Lord and turns over its affairs to Allah and stands at the door to His grace and mercy.

The Types of *Itikaaf*

Itikaaf is of two types:

(1) The obligatory *itikaaf*: This is the result of a vow that a person makes. For example, one might say, “If I am successful in that deed, I shall spend three days in *itikaaf*,” or, “If this is made easy for me, I shall spend such and such time in *itikaaf*.”

(2) The *itikaaf* which forms part of the emphasized sunnah: The best of this category is to perform *itikaaf* during the last ten days of the month of Ramadhaan.

The Essential Components of *Itikaaf*

(1) The person who is performing the *itikaaf*— *itikaaf* is an action and it requires a “doer”.

(2) Remaining in the mosque. Ali said, “There is no *itikaaf* except in a congregational mosque.” Furthermore, if the person performing the *itikaaf* does so in a mosque in which the congregational prayers are performed, he would be most ready to perform those prayers in the best manner possible and the most complete manner is by performing them in congregation.

(3) The place where one actually stays: this is the place that the person takes as his “residence” as such during his *itikaaf*.

The Conditions for the Soundness of the *Itikaaf*

(1) The person performing the *itikaaf* must be a Muslim; it is not valid from a disbeliever.

(2) He must be a person of discernment; it is not valid from an insane person or a young child.

(3) It must be performed in a mosque in which the congregational prayers are held, at least with respect to men such is the case.

(4) The one performing the *itikaaf* must be free of sexual defilement, menses and post-partum bleeding.

The *Itikaaf* is Voided by the Following Acts

(1) Sexual intercourse, even if without ejaculation, as Allah has said,

وَلَا تَبَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ

“Do not associate with your wives while you are making *itikaaf* in the mosques” (*al-Baqarah* 187).

(2) Instigating sexual intercourse.

(3) Falling unconscious or becoming insane, regardless if it be through intoxicants or otherwise.

(4) Apostatizing from Islam.

(5) Leaving the mosque for no valid reason.

Excuses That Permit One to Leave the Mosque

The excuses that permit the one performing *itikaaf* to leave the mosque are of three varieties:

(1) Legal excuses: This would include going out for the Friday Prayer or the two Eid Prayers if the mosque in which he was performing *itikaaf* does not have the Friday or Eid Prayers. The reason for this excuse is that *itikaaf* is considered an act taking one closer to Allah by avoiding sins and fleeing from them; however, not performing the Friday or Eid Prayers are sins that go against the notion of getting closer to Allah by *itikaaf*.

(2) Natural excuses: These would include the need to urinate and defecate or wash oneself after a wet dream if one could not do that washing in the mosque itself. However, these acts are conditional upon the person not remaining outside the mosque more than the time that he needs to perform those acts.

(3) Excuses of a necessary nature: These would include a person fearing that his wealth will be lost or fearing for his possessions or he fears for his own life or harm if he were to remain in the mosque in a state of *itikaaf*.

Chapter Five: Hajj (Pilgrimage) and Umrah (Lesser Visitation)

This chapter is comprised of an introduction and the following six topics:

Topic One: The conditions for the hajj and umrah;

Topic Two: The essential aspects of the hajj and umrah;

Topic Three: The obligatory acts of the hajj and umrah;

Topic Four: Forbidden acts while in the inviolable state of pilgrimage;

Topic Five: Sites for entering the inviolable state of pilgrimage;

Topic Six: The sacrifice and *aqeeqah*.

Introduction

The Place of the Pilgrimage in Islam

The pilgrimage is the fifth pillar of the five pillars of Islam. It was made obligatory in the ninth year after the Hijrah.

Allah says,

وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا