

About The Book and the Author

Essentials of Ramadan the Fasting Month

Tajuddin B. Shu`aib

This is an in-depth resume of the essential rules and laws on the Fiqh of fasting designed to provide the reader with explanation for both spiritual and physical significance and uniqueness of this remarkable act of worship. Sheikh Shu`aib clarifies major point on fasting. His focus is relevance of this divine discipline on to the life and living as well as the interpretation of related text on Fasting based on Al-Qur`an and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (saas). This book serves as a guide and reference on courses on Islamic studies.

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The Messenger of Allah (saas) reported in a Hadith Al-Qudsi that Allah said:

“All services of the son of Adam are for him except fasting, It is for Me, and I will reward him for it.” (Bukhari/Muslim)

Introduction

All praise is due to Allah, Subhanahu wa ta'ala, the Sustainer of the worlds. I pray that His peace and blessings descend upon the Most Noble of all the Messengers of Allah, Muhammad Bin Abdullah, *sallallahu 'Alaihi wa salam*, his family and companions.

Whenever the orbit turns and another month of Ramadan approaches, happiness and joy return to the Ummah, for with it come two of the greatest gifts of Allah, namely the fasting month of Ramadan and the celebration of the revelation of Al Qur'an.

Fasting is an eloquent expression of Allah, leading this Ummah to the gates of His mercy, a key to unlocking the mysteries of His nearness. While humanity is divided on the basic elements of the notion of the Creator, a Muslim is far ahead of the rest of the world in this field and travelling at the speed of light to the neighborhood of the Throne of the Creator. Where else would you find a discipline that provides direct communication between the servant the Served? Where else would you have an act of *'Ebadah* that enriches self-worth, self-strength, self-rebuilding, self discipline and control? Where else would one find a discipline that moves the believer from unauthentic to authentic as the institution of fasting? Where else would you find a discipline that enriches the vital needs of human being, both physical and spiritual? Praise be to Allah!

The institution of Fasting is a unique form of worship prescribed as part of an overall system of Islam. Its uniqueness mirrors the uniqueness of the human being, a creature of physical and spiritual parts whose excellence depends on the right proportion of these two parts. Too much of the physical material will ruin man, and too much of the spiritual will, too. Fast-

ing orients the observer to the art of balancing the spiritual essentials with physical needs, a vivid proof that there is in all of us the will power, a pivotal element that controls our actions. This will be needed to help us curb the animalistic tendencies originating from the stomach, in full. It makes us forget about our beginning, it awakens the mind and kindles clear thinking and consciousness of Allah. Fasting is the sobering of a mind and reconstruction of our spiritual faculties.

Fasting has instilled in food and beverages a religious legitimacy, as its amount and the hour taken are expressed in terms of *deen*, and chewing and sipping at proper intervals equals praise and glorification of Allah. It makes the individual ready and primed to meet the Creator. You see, it has never been easy trying to gain access to the nearness of Allah, SWT, due to several considerable obstacles obstructing our view, mainly ignorance, multiple images or double vision, passive will power, time, place, culture, upbringing and prejudice. Fortunately, the gates that lead to the nearness of Allah swing both ways with the help of fasting.

Fasting cures the double vision that many people suffer in the realm of spirituality. The inauguration of Fasting eliminates the middleman, a spiritual broker, an insidious opinion held by some that a believer can only gain access to nearness to Allah through another, who is endowed with superpowers to reach Allah more easily. No, indeed, Allah is ineffable yet approachable. It is the sum and scope of Allah's 'Ebadah that clarifies all the acts of 'Ebadah including Salat. Fasting renders this magnificent and beautiful idea of Tawhid of Allah, there being no deity but Allah, and Muhammad being His Messenger, into an effective power charge, a potent and effective concept for focusing and organizing one's world view and epitomizing the religious and psychological orientation of the believer.

On the other hand, Ramadan was the host month for the inauguration of the final revelation, Al-Qur`an Al-`Azeem. Allah

(SWT) bestowed this book upon humanity through His Messenger Muhammad bin `Abdullah. The reading of Al-Qur`an has been mandated by its Author, Allah himself, for the believers all the time, more so in the month of Ramadan, as this is reported from the Messenger. Muslims past and present have always mixed fasting with reading of Al-Qur`an. Perhaps the reason for this is that one of the objectives of Ibis (shaytan) is to hinder the believer from reading Al-Qur`an. But during Ramadan Shaytan himself is hindered from tempting the believer- for Al-Qur`an avails the reader a cherished privilege of directly conversing with the Creator of the Universe.

Thus, I included this vital discussion to help the reader with the rules that are essential for reading and reciting Al-Qur`an. Indeed, the spiritual training during the month of Ramadan can not be complete without a great deal of reading of the Book of Allah. This divine Book deals with the questions of total life: creed, moral instructions, administration of warnings, giving good news, lessons from historical events, interpretation of the material and natural phenomenon, inviting humanity to their Maker, and admonishing the unbelievers. Al-Qur`an is an exposition on the spiritual as well as physical doctrine in which every verse and sentence has an intimate bearing on the other verse and sentence. Ramadan affords a believer an opportunity to cross-reference his entire life with the reading of Al-Qur`an; and anyone who observes this practice during Ramadan has a better chance of graduating to a higher level of faith.

The third pillar of Islam, Zakat, is also discussed briefly and concisely in order to illustrate the basic Fiqh on Alms-giving. This is an opportunity that should not be lost on eligible Zakat payers: to mix Ramadan with mandatory gift giving so as to carry on the commands of Allah (SWT) and to combat greed of an affluent person and to help needy meet his essential needs, and thus build a bond of strong relationship in the Ummah.

Therefore, *ESSENTIALS of RAMADAN, THE FASTING MONTHS* a summary of the fundamental rules and laws on the Fiqh of Fasting, based on Al-Qur`an and the Sunnah of the Messenger (saas) to assist the reader in observing this special 'Ebadah of worship, as well as the traditionally related duties and obligations as mentioned earlier, Zakat and the reading of Al-Qur`an. All praise be to Allah the Most High in the beginning and in the end.

Essentials of Rama- dan, The Fasting Month

Fasting (*Siyaam*)

Fasting, or *siyaam*, has two meanings. Generally, *siyaam* or *sawm*, is derived from the root sama, to restrain from normal things, such as eating, drinking, and talking. If an individual refrains from these things, he is considered *saaim*, the observer of fast. Al-Qur'an uses the word generally when it revealed the conversation between the angel and Mary, the mother of Jesus, as the angel instructed her:

“...And if you do see any man, say, ‘I have vowed to remain silent for Allah.’ ”

(Al Qur'an 19:26)

The phrase “to remain silent” is the interpretation of the Arabic word, “*sawm*.” The reason for this interpretation is that “*sawm*” cannot mean fast, i.e. restraint from food, because Mary had just been told to eat from the palm tree. This general meaning is common in the Arabic language.

In the Shari'ah, Islamic law, the word “*sawm*” means and implies a specific act, that, is, “to worship Allah, abstaining, with intention to please Him from fast breakers, such as physical nourishment, food, drink, and sexual intercourse or a lustful discharge of semen from the period between the break of dawn until sundown.

As this definition implies, the Islamic fasting is total abstinence from any food particles passing through the mouth or nose, as well as drinks of any kind - water, milk, juices, etc. - along with abstinence from sexual association during the day that commences from the break of dawn till sunset.

Although the definition indicates restraining the stomach and private parts, the tongue, eyes, ears and other limbs are equally obligated to be restrained if the faster wants to gain the total

rewards of fasting. This is why the Messenger of Allah (saas) has been reported as saying in a hadith by Abu Hurairah:

“He who does not desist from obscene language and acting obscenely (during the period of fasting), Allah has no need that he did not eat or drink.” (Bukhari Muslim)

In another hadith by Abu Hurairah (raa), the Prophet (saas) said:

“Fasting is not only to restrain from food and drink, fasting is to refrain from obscene (acts). If someone verbally abuses you or acts ignorantly towards you, say (to them) ‘I am fasting; I am fasting.’” (Ibn Khuzaimah)

Indeed, these two reports imply fasting will not be complete until one observes three elements:

1. Restraining the stomach and the private parts from the breakers of the fast - food and drink,
2. restraining the *jawarih*, the other body parts, which may render the fast worthless despite the main factors of hunger and thirst; so the tongue, for instance, must avoid backbiting, slander, and lies; the eyes should avoid looking into things considered by the Lawgiver as unlawful; the ears must stop from listening to conversations, words, songs, and lyrics that spoil the spirit of fasting; and,
3. restraining of the heart and mind from indulging themselves in other things besides *dhikir Allah* (remembrance of Allah).

The Merits of Fasting

Islam is built on five pillars. Each represents a unique utility, an institution, if you will, through which the believer builds his relationship with the Creator and the creation. Of all the pillars of Islam, none is more special than siyaam, fasting. While there may be an appearance of *Riya*, eye service, or show, in all other pillars- Salaat, Zakaat, Hajj, and even the *Kalimah* - there is no such possibility in fasting. The only One who knows that you are really abstaining is Allah, the Almighty. It is easy to pretend to be fasting; while in hiding, you may eat or drink. Thus, fasting is considered a special worship, as Hadith reports from the Messenger of Allah (saas) have detailed.

It has been reported by the way of Abu Hurairah (raa) that the Prophet (saas) reported that Allah (SWT) said in a Hadith Al-Qudsi:

“All services of the son of Adam are for him except fasting. It is for Me, and I will reward him for it. Fasting is a shield. On the day you fast, do not use obscenity, nor yell at others, nor act ignorantly towards them. However, if anyone abuses you verbally or attempts to draw you to fight with him, say 'I am fasting' two times. The Prophet (saas) then states: I swore by the One (Allah) in Whose Hand is the soul of Muhammad, the breath of the faster is sweeter to Allah on the Day of Judgment than the scent of musk. The faster experiences enjoyment twice: he is pleased when he breaks his fast, and he is pleased when he meets his Maker” (Muslim)

Among the points this incisive hadith revealed is that fasting is Allah's. Certainly, there is only one reason why a believer will put himself or herself through this trying physical exercise that - to seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT). The fast is the single