

Fasting is a significant act of worship that Allah has ordained for Muslims. It is one of the five pillars of Islam, without which a person's faith is incomplete. Fasting aims to achieve piety and bring Muslims closer to Allah. It also teaches patience, discipline, and self-control over desires. The blessed month of Ramadan offers the yearly opportunity to observe this obligation, accompanied by detailed jurisprudential rulings that every Muslim must be aware of.

تَعْرِيفُ الصَّيَامِ - The Meaning of Fasting

Linguistically, fasting means to abstain from something. In Islamic law, it refers to abstaining from things that break the fast, such as food, drink, and other invalidating actions, from dawn until sunset, with a sincere intention for Allah's sake. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Whoever fasts Ramadan out of faith and in the hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven" (Bukhari).

مَشْرُوعِيَّةُ الصَّيَامِ - The Obligation of Fasting

Fasting is an obligation upon every adult, sane, and able Muslim.

فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ

Whoever of you witnesses the month shall fast it.

It is one of the pillars of Islam, as mentioned in the Prophet's hadith: "Islam is built on five: testifying that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad ﷺ is His Messenger, establishing prayer, giving zakat, fasting in Ramadan, and performing pilgrimage to the House if one is able to do so" (Bukhari).

Who Must fast? - مَنْ يَجِبُ عَلَيْهِ الصَّيَامُ

Fasting is obligatory upon Muslims who meet the following conditions:

1. **Islam:** Fasting is not valid for a non-Muslim.
2. **Puberty:** Fasting is not obligatory for children, but teaching and training them from a young age is recommended.
3. **Sanity:** Fasting is not required of someone who is insane or lacks awareness.
4. **Ability:** A person who is sick or elderly and cannot fast is exempted.
5. **Residence:** A traveler is permitted to break his fasting and must make up the days later.

The pillars of fasting - أَزْكَانُ الصَّيَامِ

Fasting has two pillars:

1. Intention in Fasting:

The intention is a fundamental requirement for the validity of fasting. The intention must be made at night before dawn for each day of fasting. The Prophet said, "Whoever does not make the intention to fast before dawn has no fast" (Reported by Al-Nasa'i). It is sufficient to make the intention in the heart without verbalizing it, as the intention resides in the heart.

2. Abstaining from the things that invalidate the fasting:

The things that invalidate fasting include:

- Eating and drinking deliberately: If a person eats or drinks intentionally, their fast is broken, and they must make up the day and offer expiation.
- Deliberate vomiting: Inducing vomiting invalidates the fast, but if a person vomits involuntarily, their fast remains valid.

حُكْمٌ مُهِمٌّ - Important Ruling

If a person ate or drank forgetfully, his/her fast remains valid. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Whoever forgets while fasting and eats or drinks, let them continue their fast, for it was Allah who provided them with food and drink" (Reported by Bukhari). Likewise, the fast is not invalidated if something unintentionally enters the body, such as dust or water droplets during ablution.

أَعْذَارٌ تُبَيِّحُ الْفِطْرَ - Excuses Permitting Breaking the Fast

1. Illness:

A person who is ill and finds fasting difficult or if fasting worsens their condition is permitted to break their fast. They must make up the days missed after recovering. Allah says: "And whoever is ill or on a journey, then an equal number of days [are to be made up]" (Al-Baqarah: 185).

2. Travel:

A traveler who faces hardship during travel is permitted to break their fast, provided the journey exceeds approximately 85 kilometers. The missed days must be made up after Ramadan.

3. Pregnancy and Nursing:

A pregnant or nursing woman who fears for her health or the health of her child is permitted to break her fast. She must make up the missed days after Ramadan.

4. Old Age:

An elderly person who is unable to fast due to weakness or chronic illness is allowed to break their fast. They must feed one poor person for each day missed.

The Types of Fasting - أَقْسَامُ الصَّيَامِ

There are two types of fasting

1. Obligatory Fasting:

This includes fasting during the month of Ramadan, making up missed days, expiatory fasts such as for breaking an oath or for intercourse during the day of Ramadan, and fasting vows.

2. Recommended Fasting:

This includes fasting which is not obligatory but highly rewarded. Examples include:

- Fasting six days of Shawwal after Ramadan.
- Fasting on Mondays and Thursdays.
- Fasting the "White Days" (13th, 14th, and 15th of lunar months).
- Fasting on the Day of Arafah (for those not performing Hajj).
- Fasting on the Day of Ashuraa.

Etiquette of Fasting - آدَابُ الصَّيَامِ

There are many etiquette for fasting, here are some of it:

1. Pre-Dawn Meal (Sahoor):

It is recommended to eat the pre-dawn meal (sahoor) before fasting begins, as it brings blessings. The Prophet said, "Eat sahoor, for in sahoor there is blessing" (Bukhari).

2. Hastening the Breaking of the Fast:

It is recommended to break the fast immediately at sunset, starting with dates or water. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "The people will continue to be in a good state as long as they hasten the breaking of the fast" (Bukhari).

3. Supplication at the Time of Breaking the Fast:

It is sunnah to make supplication at the time of breaking the fast, as it is a time when prayers are answered. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "The fasting person has a supplication that is not rejected when they break their fast" (Reported by Ibn Majah).

4. Good Character:

The fasting person should observe good manners, avoid anger, disputes, and foul language. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "If it is a fasting day for one of you, let him not engage in obscene speech or act ignorantly. If someone fights him or insults him, let him say: 'I am fasting'" (Reported by Bukhari).

5. Increasing Good Deeds:

It is encouraged to engage in increased acts of worship during Ramadan, such as reading the Quran, giving charity, praying, and making supplication, as Ramadan is a month of mercy and forgiveness.

فَوَائِدُ الصَّيَامِ - Benefits of Fasting

Fasting offers religious, physical, psychological, and social benefits, including:

- Strengthening Spirituality: Fasting increases Muslims' piety and brings them closer to Allah.
- Self-Control and Discipline: Fasting teaches a person how to control their desires, enhancing mental strength.
- Physical Health: Fasting improves digestion and helps in detoxifying the body.
- Social Solidarity: Experiencing hunger during fasting fosters empathy for the poor and needy, encouraging charity and support for others.

Conclusion

Fasting is more than just abstaining from food and drink; it is an act of worship aimed at purifying the soul, increasing piety, and enhancing one's relationship with Allah. Every Muslim should observe the rules of fasting and strive to attain the spiritual goals behind this noble act of worship.

QUIZ

Multiple Choice Questions

1- Fasting is not valid for a _____.

- A) Muslim
- B) Child
- C) Non-Muslim

2- A pregnant or nursing woman may break her fast if she fears for her _____.

- A) Wealth
- B) Health
- C) Comfort

3- An elderly person unable to fast must _____.

- A) Make up missed days after Ramadan
- B) Feed one poor person for each day missed
- C) Ignore the obligation

4- Fasting on _____ days is considered recommended.

- A) Red
- B) Green
- C) White

5- The journey distance permitting a traveler to break their fast is approximately _____ kilometers.

- A) 50
- B) 85
- C) 100

6- Which of the following is NOT an invalidator of fasting?

- A) Eating deliberately
- B) Drinking deliberately
- C) Forgetful eating or drinking

7- For a fast to be valid, the intention must be made:

- A) After sunset
- B) At night before dawn
- C) Anytime during the day

8- A person traveling over _____ kilometers is allowed to break their fast.

- A) 70
- B) 85
- C) 100

9- Which of the following is considered a recommended fast?

- A) Fasting during Ramadan
- B) Fasting six days of Shawwal
- C) Making up missed Ramadan days

10- If a person eats or drinks intentionally while fasting, they must:

- A) Make up the day only
- B) Make up the day and offer expiation
- C) Continue fasting without any action

QUIZ

Answer the Questions

1- what is *siyam* ?

2- Who must fast?

3- What are the pillars of Fasting?

4- what are the things that break fasting?

5- What are some of the etiquette of fasting?

6- What are the types of fasting? Give examples to each type.

7- What are the valid excuses to break fasting?

True or False

1. A person who vomits involuntarily during fasting must make up the day.
2. Deliberate vomiting invalidates the fast.
3. Fasting during Ramadan is a form of recommended fasting.
4. The intention to fast must be verbalized for it to be valid.
5. If a person eats or drinks forgetfully while fasting, their fast remains valid.
6. A person who is sick and unable to fast must pay expiation instead of making up the missed days.
7. Fasting teaches patience, discipline, and self-control over desires.
8. Eating or drinking during the fast is permissible as long as it is unintentional.
9. The intention for fasting can be made any time before sunset.
10. Fasting is not obligatory for children but is recommended to train them from a young age.

Fill-in-the-Blank

1. Fasting is one of the five _____ of Islam, without which a person's faith is incomplete.
2. The month of _____ offers a yearly opportunity for Muslims to observe the obligation of fasting.
3. Linguistically, fasting means to _____ from something.
4. In Islamic law, fasting involves abstaining from things that break the fast, such as _____ and _____, from dawn until sunset.
5. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Whoever fasts Ramadan out of faith and in the hope of reward, his previous _____ will be forgiven"
6. Fasting is obligatory upon every _____, _____, and _____ Muslim.
7. The hadith states that Islam is built on five pillars, including fasting in _____.
8. The intention for fasting must be made at _____ before dawn for each day of fasting.
9. If a person eats or drinks _____ while fasting, their fast is broken, and they must make up the day.