



Ramadan: Rules and Etiquette

Sheikh/ Khalifa Ezzat

June 27 -2014/ Sha'ban 29, 1435

Dear brothers and sisters: Ramadan is a golden chance for those who want to bring themselves nearer and closer to Allah, for those who wish their sins to be forgiven, for those who wish to be freed from Hell-fire. This blessed month is a great opportunity for goodness, blessing, worship, and obedience to God. It is a month whose beginning is mercy, whose middle is forgiveness, and whose end is redemption from the Fire.

Dear brothers and sisters: The Messenger of God [pbuh] addressed his companions on the last day of Sha'ban, saying, *'Oh people! A great month has come over you; a blessed month; a month in which there is a night better than a thousand months. A month in which God has made it compulsory upon you to fast by day, and voluntary to pray by night. Whoever draws nearer [to God] by performing any of the [optional] good deeds in [this month] shall receive the same reward as performing an obligatory deed at any other time, and whoever performs an obligatory deed in [this month] shall receive the reward of performing seventy obligations at any other time. It is the month of patience, and the reward of patience is Heaven. It is the month of charity, and a month in which a believer's sustenance is increased. Whoever gives food to a fasting person to break his fast, shall have his sins forgiven, and he will be saved from the Fire of Hell, and he shall have the same reward as the fasting person, without his reward being diminished at all.'* [Ibn Khuzaymah]

He also said, *'Every action of the son of Adam is given manifold reward, each good deed receiving ten times its like, up to seven hundred times. God said, 'Except for fasting, it is for Me and I will give recompense for it, he leaves off his selfish desires and his food for Me.'* for the fasting person there are two times of joy; a time when he breaks his fast and a time of joy when he meets his Lord, and the smell coming from the mouth of the fasting person is better with God than the smell of musk.' [al-Bukhari]

Dear brothers and sisters: The Qur'an says [which means], *[O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those who were before you, in order that you may learn taqwa [piety]]* [2:183]. *Taqwa* is a very important spiritual and ethical term of the Qur'an. It is the sum total of all Islamic spirituality and ethics. It is a quality in a believer's life that keeps him/her aware of Allah all the time. A person who has *taqwa* loves to do good and avoid evil. *Taqwa* is piety, righteousness and consciousness of Allah. *Taqwa* requires patience and perseverance. Fasting teaches patience, and with patience one can rise to the high position of *taqwa*. The Prophet [pbuh] said that fasting is a shield. It protects a person from sin and lustful desires.

We should prepare for Ramadan by recognizing our shortcomings and our duties. We should set ourselves straight so that in Ramadan we will have a higher degree of faith, for faith increases and decreases. It increases through obedience to God and it decreases through disobedience and sin. We should welcome Ramadan by asking for forgiveness and making sincere repentance. We should never forget that God stretches forth His hand during the day to accept the repentance of those who sinned at night, and He stretches forth His hand at night to accept the repentance of those who sinned during the day. By taking stock, repenting and seeking forgiveness, this is how we should welcome Ramadan.

Dear brothers and sisters: Everyone should prepare welcome Ramadan by learning the rules and etiquette of Ramadan; by learning the meaning and purpose of fasting; who must fast, who must not, who is allowed to break the fast and so on. Everyone should know that fasting is mandatory on every Muslim, male or female, who is adult [i.e., has reached puberty] and sane and who is not sick or travelling, and woman who is not pregnant, breast-feeding, or in the menstrual period, or in the

period of post childbirth confinement. The old people man or woman, and the one whose sickness is permanent and cannot fast are allowed to break the fast and give *fidyah* or *sadaqah* to the poor and needy for every day [at least five pounds for each day] without the need to make up later. While the man or woman whose sickness is temporary can break the fasting and make up later. The person who has diabetes has the choice to fast if he/she is able or break the fasting if he has to take medicine during the day. It depends on the level of diabetes. He/she should consult the doctor for that. The traveller has the choice to fast or not. The pregnant and breast-feeding women can break the fasting and make up later. Some scholars say she should pay *fidyah* while others say she makes up later.

Dear brothers and sisters: Fasting according to the Sunnah is to abstain from what is not allowed during the day such as food, liquids and sexual activity from dawn to sunset. It is also to avoid doing bad actions or behaviours; to have intention for fasting; to have pre-dawn meal [*suhur*] late, breaking the fast as soon as possible at the time of *Margrib*, Making *Du'a*; increasing good acts such prayers, giving charity, reading the Qur'an, praying *tahajjud* [night prayers], making dhikr..etc.

Dear brothers and sisters: The things which invalidate fast are of two kinds: The first one requires *Qada* [only making up the missed days], the other one not only requires *Qada* but also *Kaffarah* [expiation]. **The following things require making up [Qada] only:** intentionally eating or drinking; deliberately causing oneself to vomit; the beginning of menstruation or post childbirth bleeding even in the last moment before sunset; deliberate ejaculation for reasons other than sexual intercourse; intending to break the fasting before sunset even if one changes his mind; eating, drinking or having intercourse after dawn on the mistaken assumption that it is not dawn yet. Similarly, engaging in these acts before Maghrib on the mistaken assumption that it is already sunset. Things that not only require *Qada* but also *Kaffarah* are the following: Sexual intercourse during fasting [dawn to sunset]. The penalty is to fast an additional period of 60 continuous days. If one is not able to do so then he must feed sixty poor people one average meal each.

Dear brothers and sisters: According to the Islamic academy of fiqh, the following things are permissible during fasting:

Unintentionally eating, drinking or smoking; - Unintentional vomiting, -Swallowing things which are not possible to avoid, such as one's saliva, street dust, smoke, etc., -Injection or intra-venous which is solely medical and not nutritional, - Taking a bath or shower. If water is swallowed involuntarily it will not invalidate the fast, -Using perfumes, wearing contact lenses or using eye drops, -Taking injections or having a blood test.

Using *miswak* [tooth-stick] or toothbrush [even with tooth paste] and rinsing the mouth or nostrils with water, -General medical examinations which do not give energy or food are also permissible. If one sleeps during the daytime and has a wet dream; if one has intercourse during the night and was not able to make *Ghusl* [bathe] before dawn, he/she can begin the fast and make *ghusl* later. Kissing between husband and wife is allowed in fast if they can control themselves. I hope that these rules answer some of your frequent questions.

Dear brothers and sisters: finally, I would like to pay your attention that it is not permissible to follow the timetable of another country such as Makkah or others to break your fasting with the excuse that it is a long day. This can only be done in countries where sometimes it is always daytime or always night. In countries where there is daytime and night like Britain, you cannot follow another countries time. However if you are unable to fast the whole day because of extreme difficulty that it will cause, then you can break your fasting and make it up later. The Qur'an Says: '*Allah does not burden a person more than he can bear.*' [2:286]

In the end, I ask God, the Almighty, to help us all, to guide us all, and to help us to fast, pray and to do acts of worship and to avoid doing evil.