



مقاصد الصوم

THE OBJECTIVES OF FASTING

SHAYKH IZZUDEEN IBN ABD AL-SALAM AS-SULAMI
(577-660 AH)



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By

Shaykh Izzudeen ibn Abd Al- Salam As Sulami
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¹ Sunan Abī Dawud 4811

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon our Master Muhammad, his Family, and his Companions.

Biography of the Author

Shaykh 'Izzudeen 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn 'Abd al-Salam ibn Abi al-Qasim ibn al-Hasan al-Dimashqi, Sultan ul-'Ulama, Abu Muhammad al-Sulami, was a famous theologian and the leading Shafi'i authority of his generation. Ibn 'Abd al-Salam was born in Damascus in 577 AH and died in Cairo in 660 AH.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ali Ibn Daqiq al-'Id gave him the title of Sultan ul-Ulama (The King of the Scholars).

He produced several brilliant works in Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh, Usul ul Fiqh, Tasawuf, etc. Some of his more popular works are:

- Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim
- Mukhtasar Sahih Muslim
- Bidayat al-Sul fi Tafdhil al-Rasul
- Targhib Ahl al-Islam fi Sakni al-Sham
- al-Farq bayn al-Iman wa'l Islam or Ma'na al-Iman wa'l Islam
- al-Anwa' fi 'ilm al-Tawhid
- Bayan Ahwal al-Nas yawm al-Qiyamah
- Shajarat al-'Arif wa'l Ahwal wasalih al-Aqwal wa'l A'mal
- al-Fitan wa'l Balaya wa'l Mihan
- Maqasid al-Sawm
- Manasik al-Hajj
- Maqasid al-Salah
- Ahkam al-Jihad wa Fadha'ilih

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Chapter One Obligation of Fasting

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَتَّقُونَ

Yaa ayyuhal lazeena aamanoo kutiba 'alaikumus Siyaamu kamaa kutiba
'alal lazeena min qablikum la'allakum tattaqoon

O you who believe! Prescribed for you is the Fast, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may deserve God's protection (against the temptations of your carnal soul) and attain piety.²

لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

(La'allakum tattaqoon)

So that you may deserve God's protection (against the temptations of your carnal soul) and attain piety.

Protect yourself from the fire of hell by fasting because it is a reason sins are forgiven.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Islam is built upon five: to worship Allah and to disbelieve in what is worshiped besides him, to establish prayer, to give charity, to perform Hajj pilgrimage to the house, and to fast the month of Ramadan.”³

² Surah Baqarah Verse 183

³ Sahih Bukhari 8 & Sahih Muslim 16

Chapter Two Virtues of Fasting

Benefits of fasting:

1. Raising one's rank
2. Expiation for sins
3. Weakening desires
4. Increasing charity
5. Increasing good deeds
6. Thanking the knower of the hidden
7. Restraining from the desire of sins and unlawful deeds

1.Raising one's rank

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “When Ramadan enters, the gates of Paradise are opened, the gates of Hellfire are closed, and the devils are chained”.⁴

Regarding the following phrases:

“The gates of Paradise are opened” this is due to the increase of good deeds which will result in opening the gates of paradise.

“The gates of the Hellfire are closed” concerns the decrease of the unlawful deeds which involves closing the gates of hellfire.

“The Devils are Chained” means the absence of their whispers to those who are fasting because they do not desire to do unlawful deeds.

⁴ Sahih Bukhari 1899

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Allah said, 'All the deeds of the sons of Adam are for them, except fasting which is for Me, and I will give the reward for it.' Fasting is a shield or protection from the fire and from committing sins.

If one of you is fasting, he should avoid sexual relation with his wife and quarrelling, and if somebody should fight or quarrel with him, he should say, 'I am fasting.' By Him in Whose Hands my soul is' the unpleasant smell coming out from the mouth of a fasting person is better in the sight of Allah than the smell of musk.

There are two pleasures for the fasting person, one at the time of breaking his fast, and the other at the time when he will meet his Lord; then he will be pleased because of his fasting”.⁵

“Fasting is a shield” it is a protection from Allah’s torment.

“Say I am fasting” so that he reminds himself that he is fasting and not to reply to others with insults.

“Two Pleasures” one is in his achievement of completing an act of worship and the other is for the reward when he gets it.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Every (good) deed of the son of Adam would be multiplied, a good deed receiving tenfold to seven hundredfold reward. Allah, the Exalted and Majestic, said: With the exception of fasting, for it is done for Me and I will give a reward for it, for one abandons his passion and food for My sake”.⁶

Allah attached fasting to him as an honor because fasting does not include Riya (Showing off). Hunger and thirst are not ways to draw near to the kings of this world nor to the idols.

“I will give a reward for it” emphasizes the greatness of this reward (even though it is Allah who rewards all good deeds).

⁵ Sahih Bukhari 1904

⁶ Sahih Muslim 1151

“For one who abandons his passion and food for my sake” means that he gave preference to obeying his lord over obeying himself (from strong desires and carnal impulses). Allah himself will reward him and whoever gives preference to Allah, Allah gives preference to him and Allah will love you the same as you love him.

If someone is about to do a prohibited action and then leaves it because of his fear of Allah, Allah says to the Hafazah (Angels) write it for him as a good deed. Indeed, he has abandoned his desires for my sake⁷.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “There is a gate in Paradise called Ar-Raiyan, and those who observe fasts will enter through it on the Day of Resurrection and none except them will enter through it. It will be said, 'Where are those who used to observe fasts?' They will get up, and none except them will enter through it. After their entry, the gate will be closed, and nobody will enter through it”.⁸

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “There is a gate in Paradise called Ar-Raiyan, those who fast shall be invited into it, and whoever was among those who fasted, then he will enter it; and whoever enters it, he will never thirst again”.⁹

The specification of entering paradise through the gate of Ar-Raiyan for the fasting people, they are distinguished by that gate because of the uniqueness and honour of their act of worship.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Indeed the Angels send salat upon the fasting person when (others) eat in his presence, until they finish”.¹⁰

⁷ Sahih Bukhari 7501

⁸ Sahih Bukhari 1896

⁹ Jami Tirmidhi 765

¹⁰ Jami Tirmidhi 785

The Angels pray for the fasting person when someone eats in his presence because he abandons food although it is in front of him, this is a great sign of self-repression. He deserves their prayer upon him, and their prayer is their supplication of mercy and forgiveness for him.

2.Expiation for sins

As for the expiation for sins, the Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Ramadhan to Ramadhan are expiations for the (sins) committed in between (their intervals) provided one shuns the major sins”.¹¹

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Whoever observes fasts during the month of Ramadan out of sincere faith, and hoping to attain Allah's rewards, then all his past sins will be forgiven”.¹²

This means believing in its obligation and seeking its reward from his Lord.

3.Breaking the desires

As for breaking the desires, hunger and thirst break the desire for unlawful deeds. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Whoever among you can afford to get married, let him do so, and whoever cannot afford it should fast, for it will be a restraint for him.”¹³

The Prophet(ﷺ) said “Satan circulates in the human body as blood does.”¹⁴ So, narrow his way by hunger.

¹¹ Sahih Muslim 233

¹² Sahih Bukhari 38

¹³ Sahih Bukhari 1905

¹⁴ Sahih Bukhari 2039

4.Increasing Charity

Increase Charity because when the fasting person feels hungry, he would remember what he had because of hunger and this would urge him to feed the hungry.

It was reported that Sulaiman, or Yusuf (peace be upon them) did not eat until all those related to him ate. He was asked about that, he replied I fear that once I am full, I may forget the hungry.

5.Increasing Good Deeds

The fasting person remembers the hunger and the thirst of the dwellers of the hellfire, so this urges him to increase in doing good deeds to save himself from hellfire.

6.Thanking the Knower of the hidden

When one fasts, he realizes Allah's blessings on him when he is satiated, so he thanks Allah for that. Blessings are not appreciated until they are lost.

7.Restricting from the desire of sins and unlawful deeds

When the soul is full, it aspires to sin and longs towards unlawful deeds and when the soul is hungry and thirsty, it aspires for food and drink. The soul's aspiration and occupation for the things which it needs, is better than its aspiration to sin. One of the Salaf favoured fasting over all kinds of worship. When he was asked about that, he said when Allah sees my soul while it quarrels for food and drink is preferable to me than when Allah sees it while it quarrels for his disobedience when it is full.

8. Other Benefits of Fasting

Fasting has many other benefits such as mental and physical health. It is reported in a Hadith: “Fast and you will become healthy”.¹⁵

He who provides a fasting person something with which to break his fast, will earn the same reward as the one who was observing the fast. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "He who provides a fasting person something with which to break his fast, will earn the same reward as the one who was observing the fast, without diminishing in any way the reward of the latter."¹⁶

Whoever provides thirty-six fasting people something with which to break their fast each year, it is as if he fasted the whole year, and the one who does that a lot having this intention in mind, Allah will give him the reward for fasting many years.

He who observes prayer at night (Tarawih) throughout Ramadan, out of sincerity of Faith and in the hope of earning reward will have his past sins pardoned.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “He who observes prayer at night (Tarawih) throughout Ramadan, out of sincerity of Faith and in the hope of earning reward will have his past sins forgiven”.¹⁷

¹⁵ Fayd ul Qadeer 5060

¹⁶ Sunan Darimi 1702

¹⁷ Sahih Muslim 759

Chapter Three

Etiquette of Fasting

Protect the Tongue

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Whoever does not give up forged speech and evil actions, Allah is not in need of his leaving his food and drink” (i.e., Allah will not accept his fasting).¹⁸

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “There are people who fast and get nothing from their fast except hunger, and there are those who pray and get nothing from their prayer but a sleepless night”.¹⁹

When invited to have a meal and you are fasting

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “If any one of you is invited to a meal when he is fasting, he should say: I am fasting”.²⁰

What should be said when the fast is broken?

The Prophet (ﷺ) said when he broke his fast:

ذَهَبَ الظَّمَاُ وَابْتَلَّتِ الْعُرُوقُ وَثَبَتَ الْأَجْرُ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

Dhahaba'd dhama' wa'btallati'l `uruq wa thabata'l ajru in sha' Allah

“Thirst has gone, the arteries are moist, and the reward is sure, if Allah wills”.²¹

¹⁸ Sahih Bukhari 1903

¹⁹ Sunan Ibn Majah 1690

²⁰ Sahih Muslim 1150

²¹ Sunan Abu Dawud 2357

The Prophet (ﷺ) said when he broke his fast:

اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ صُمْتُ وَعَلَى رِزْقِكَ أَفْطَرْتُ

Allahumma laka sumtu, wa `ala rizqika aftartu

“O Allah, for you I have fasted, and with your provision I have broken my fast”.²²

In another narration the Prophet (ﷺ) said when he broke the fast:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَعَانَنِي فَصَمْتُ، وَرَزَقَنِي فَأَفْطَرْتُ

“Al-hamdu li’l Llah alladhi a`anani fa-sumt, wa razaqani fa-aftartu”

“All praise is due to Allah who assisted me, so I fasted; and who provided me, so I could break my fast”.²³

With what to break the fast?

Fresh dates or Dry dates or Water

There is a narration that the Prophet (ﷺ) would break the fast with fresh dates before performing Salat. If there were no fresh dates then (he would break the fast) with dried dates, and if there were no dried dates then he would take a few sips of water."²⁴

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “When one of you is fasting, he should break his fast with dates; but if he cannot get any, then (he should break his fast) with water, for water is purifying”.²⁵

²² Sunan Abu Dawud 2358

²³ Ibn al-Sunni’s Amal al-Yawm Wal-Laylah 479

²⁴ Jami Tirmidhi 696

²⁵ Sunan Abu Dawud 2355

Hasten to the break the fast and delay the suhur (Predawn meal)

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Take Suhur as there is a blessing in it”.²⁶

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “The people will remain on the right path as long as they hasten the breaking of the fast”.²⁷

The Prophet said: “Allah, Mighty and Sublime is He, said: 'Those of My worshippers who are most beloved to me are the quickest to break their fast’”.²⁸

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Religion will continue to prevail as long as people hasten to break the fast, because the Jews and the Christians delay doing so”.²⁹

Amru bin Maymoon (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “The Companions of the Prophet (may Allah be pleased with all of them) were the hastiest at breaking their fasts and the slowest at finishing As-Suhur”.³⁰

The interval between the Suhur and the Salaah of the Prophet (ﷺ) was sufficient to recite fifty verses of the Qur'an."³¹

We were asked to hasten breaking the fast because hunger and thirst may harm a person, there is no benefit or good deed in prolonging it.

A humorous person from the Salaf was seen eating in the market and someone asked him about it, he said: “Delay in payment by a rich man is injustice”.³²

²⁶ Sahih Bukhari 1923

²⁷ Sahih Bukhari 1957

²⁸ Jami Tirmidhi 700

²⁹ Sunan Abu Dawud 2353

³⁰ Musannaf Abdur Razzaq 7591

³¹ Sahih Bukhari 1921

³² Sahih Bukhari 2287

Chapter Four

Avoidance

Continuous Fasting (Al Wisal)

Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) forbade Al-Wisal in fasting. So, one of the Muslims said to him, “But you practice Al- Wisal. O Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)!” The Prophet (ﷺ) replied: “Who amongst you is similar to me? I am given food and drink during my sleep by my Lord”.

So, when the people refused to stop Al-Wisal (fasting continuously), the Prophet (ﷺ) fasted day and night continuously along with them for a day and then another day and then they saw the crescent moon (of the month of Shawwal).

The Prophet (ﷺ) said to them (angrily), "If it (the crescent) had not appeared, I would have made you fast for a longer period." That was as a punishment for them when they refused to stop (practicing Al-Wisal).³³

We are prevented from continuing to fast after Maghrib because it will weaken our strength and harm our bodies and it is not considered an act of worship.

³³ Sahih Bukhari 1965

Kissing

Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) used to kiss and embrace (his wives) while he was fasting, and he had more power to control his desires than any of you.³⁴

It is permissible if it does not incite desire, but it is disliked if it incites desire. If it incites desire it may invalidate the fast.

Cupping

The Prophet (ﷺ) was cupped while he was fasting.³⁵

Anas bin Malik was asked whether they disliked the cupping for a fasting person. He replied in the negative and said: “Only if it causes weakness”.³⁶

Cupping is disliked for the one who might become weak. It may cause him to break his fast or he may feel the difficulty of worship or he may get bored of it and dislike it.³⁷

Applying Collyrium (Kohl/Surma)

Anas b. Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) that he used to apply collyrium when he was fasting.³⁸

Al-A'mash (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “I did not see any of our companions who abominated the use of collyrium by a man who

³⁴ Sahih Bukhari 1927

³⁵ Sahih Bukhari 1939

³⁶ Sahih Bukhari 1940

³⁷ Cupping breaks the fast only in the opinion of the Hanbalis, who observe that the cupper and the patient both break the fast. (al-Fiqh `alal-madhahib al-Arba`ah)

³⁸ Sunan Abu Dawud 2378

was fasting. Ibrahim would permit the man who was fasting to apply collyrium with aloe”.³⁹

There is no difference between intense kohl which can be felt /tasted in the throat or normal kohl. It is better to avoid both to be protected from the disagreement of the scholars.⁴⁰

Sniffing water during Wudu

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Perform ablution in full and make the fingers go through the beard and snuff with water well except when you are fasting”.⁴¹

The Prophet (ﷺ) forbade the exaggeration in rinsing the nose because it may invalidate the fast. Allah knows best.

³⁹ Sunan Abu Dawud 2379

⁴⁰ Application of collyrium (*kohl*) invalidates the fast only in the opinion of the Malikis, provided it is applied during the day and its taste is felt in the throat. (al-Fiqh `alal-madhahib al-Arba`ah)

⁴¹ Sunan Abu Dawud 142

Chapter Five

Seeking the Night of Power

The Night of power is a blessed night. The blessings Allah has placed in it is like (the blessings that are placed in) 1000 months.

It is known as the Night of Power either by the honour of its value and high status or because of the blessings, sustenance, and appointed times from year to year that are assessed in that night.⁴²

The angels and the Ruh (Jibril) descend in that night and they give salam to those who work hard “in worship”. The scholars differed, do they give salam from themselves or do they convey it from their Lord?

A night in which Eid comes, in which the Lord of the world gives salam to him is better than a thousand months and to be sought by the seekers and to be appealed by the appealers. That is why the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) searched for it with his companions and it is also the practice of the righteous people after him.

It is in the last 10 nights of Ramadan; it is closer to the odd nights than the even nights. Apparently, it is the 21st night because the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) saw it and then was caused to forget it. And it was mentioned that he prostrated in the morning in water and mud.

It was reported that rainwater was dropping from the mosque’s roof on the night of the 21st, and mark of the mud was seen on the forehead and the nose of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).⁴³

⁴² Hafidh Ibn Hajar: Fath-ul-Bari 255/4

⁴³ Sahih Bukhari 2018

The night of the 21st was probably the night of power because the Prophet (ﷺ) said that moon was like half bowl that night. The moon does not look like half bowl except on the 7th night and the 21st night.⁴⁴

One of the virtues of this night is that He who observes prayer throughout this night, out of sincerity of Faith and in hope of earning reward will have his past sins pardoned. The proof of what we mentioned is his (ﷺ) saying, “I have been shown Lailatul-Qadr, then I was caused to forget it, so seek it in the last ten nights”⁴⁵

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Search for the Night of Qadr in the odd nights of the last ten days of Ramadan”.⁴⁶

Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) reported: We were talking about Lailat-ul-Qadr in the presence of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and he said: “He who amongst you remembers (the night) when the moon arose, and it was like a piece of plate”.⁴⁷

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Whoever established prayers on the night of Qadr out of sincere faith and hoping for a reward from Allah, then all his previous sins will be forgiven”.⁴⁸

It is permissible to increase Thana (praising Allah) and Dua (Supplicating to Allah).

One should repeat this dua often.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ عَفُوفٌ تُحِبُّ الْعَفْوَ فَاعْفُ عَنِّي

'Allahumma innaka 'afuwwun tuhibbul-'afwa, fa'fu 'anni

⁴⁴ Durr ul Manthoor 371/6

⁴⁵ Sahih Muslim 1166

⁴⁶ Sahih Bukhari 2017

⁴⁷ Sahih Muslim 1170

⁴⁸ Sahih Bukhari 1901

O Allah, you are forgiving and love forgiveness, so forgive me.⁴⁹

If one was to confine himself to praise Allah this is better because it is narrated that the Messenger (ﷺ) said: “The Lord, Blessed and Most High is He, has said: 'Whoever is busy with remembering Me and asking Me, then I shall give him more than what I give to those who ask’”.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Sunan Ibn Majah 3850

⁵⁰ Jami Tirmidhi 2926

Chapter Six

Seclusion, Generosity and Recital of the Quran in Ramadhan

أَنْ طَهَّرَا بَيْتِي لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ

An tahhiraa Baitiya littaaa'ifeena wal'aakifeena warrukka'is sujud

“Purify My House for those who go around it as a rite of worship, and those who abide in devotion, and those who bow and prostrate (in the Prayer)”.⁵¹

وَلَا تُبَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ

Wa laa tubaashiroo hunna wa antum 'aakifoona fil masaajid; tilka

“And do not associate in intimacy with them (your wives) during the period when you are in retreat in the mosques”.⁵²

Seclusion (I'tikaf) is to visit Allah at one of his houses and worship him there and the visitor deserves to be honored by the host.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Allah will prepare for him who goes to the mosque (every) morning and in the afternoon (for the congregational prayer) an honourable place in Paradise with good hospitality for (what he has done) every morning and afternoon”.⁵³

⁵¹ Surah Baqarah Verse 125

⁵² Surah Baqarah Verse 187

⁵³ Sahih Bukhari 662

Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) said: “The Prophet (ﷺ) used to practice Ṭikaf in the last ten days of Ramadan till he died and then his wives used to practice Ṭikaf after him”.⁵⁴

Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) said: “With the start of the last ten days of Ramadan, the Prophet (ﷺ) used to tighten his waist belt and used to pray all night and used to keep his family awake for the prayers”.⁵⁵

Aisha (Allah be pleased with her) reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) used to exert himself in devotion during the last ten nights to a greater extent than at any other time.⁵⁶

Tighten his waist belt refers to not being intimate with his wives or can also mean diligence and perseverance in worship.

It is recommended to recite the Quran abundantly and it is better to be generous in this month.

Ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “The Prophet (ﷺ) was the most generous amongst the people, and he used to be more so in the month of Ramadan when Gabriel visited him, and Gabriel used to meet him on every night of Ramadan till the end of the month. The Prophet (ﷺ) used to recite the Holy Qur'an to Gabriel, and when Gabriel met him, he used to be more generous than a fast wind (which causes rain and welfare)”.⁵⁷

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Every year Gabriel used to revise the Qur'an with me once only, but this year he has done so twice”.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Sahih Bukhari 2026

⁵⁵ Sahih Bukhari 2024

⁵⁶ Sahih Muslim 1175

⁵⁷ Sahih Bukhari 1902

⁵⁸ Sahih Bukhari 3624

Chapter Seven

Following Ramadhan with the six days fast in Shawwal

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “He who observed the fast of Ramadan and then followed it with six (fasts) of Shawwal, it would be as if he fasted perpetually”.⁵⁹

It is like fasting a year because the reward of the good deed is ten the like thereof, so each day will be the same reward as 10 days.

⁵⁹ Sahih Muslim 1164

Chapter Eight

Fasting in General

وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ

Wassaaa'imeena wassaaa'imaati

The fasting men and the Fasting women.⁶⁰

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Indeed, anyone who fasts for one day for Allah's Pleasure, Allah will keep his face away from the (Hell) fire for (a distance covered by a journey) seventy years”.⁶¹

Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) said: “The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) used to fast till one would say that he would never stop fasting, and he would abandon fasting till one would say that he would never fast. I never saw Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) fasting for a whole month except the month of Ramadan”.⁶²

Mu'adha al-'Adawiyya reported that she asked 'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with them), whether the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) observed fasts for three days during every month. She said: “Yes, I said to her: Which were (the particular) days of the month on which he observed fast? She said: He was not particular about the days of the month on which to observe fast”.⁶³

⁶⁰ Surah Ahzab Verse 35

⁶¹ Sahih Bukhari 2840

⁶² Sahih Bukhari 1969

⁶³ Sahih Muslim 1160

Chapter Nine

Voluntary Fasting

First - Fasting one day and not the next

Abdullah bin 'Amr (may Allah be pleased with him) reported Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying: “With Allah the best fasting is that of David and the best prayer is that of David (peace be upon him) for he slept half of the night and stood for prayer for the third of it and (then) slept the sixth part of it and he observed fast one day and broke on the other”.⁶⁴

Abdullah bin `Amr (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) was informed that I had taken an oath to fast daily and to pray (every night) all the night throughout my life (so Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) came to me and asked whether it was correct): I replied, “Let my parents be sacrificed for you! I said so”.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “You cannot do that. So, fast for few days and give it up for few days, offer Salat (prayer) and sleep. Fast three days a month as the reward of good deeds is multiplied ten times and that will be equal to one year of fasting”.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said to me, “Fast one day and give up fasting for two days”. I replied: “I can do better than that”. The Prophet (ﷺ) said to me, “Fast one day and give up fasting for a day and that is the fasting of Prophet David and that is the best fasting”. I said: “I have the power to fast better (more) than that”. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “There is no better fasting than that.”⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Sahih Muslim 1159

⁶⁵ Sahih Bukhari 1976

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) preferred alternate fasting i.e., fasting one day and not the next day, as described in the above hadith, for two reasons:

i) Ibn Amr could not endure more than that. The proof is that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: “If you did that your body would get tired and your eyes will become weak.”⁶⁶ So, he (ﷺ) told him the best fasting is to fast one day and not the next.

ii) The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) mentioned that the fast of Dawud (Peace be upon him) did not affect his strength as it is shown in the words of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ): “He did not flee when meeting the enemy”⁶⁷ and based upon this hadith by Ibn ‘Amr Al Aas specifies the best fast, and the reality is that fasting weakens the strength of any man.

Most of the companions used to ask the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) about the best deeds and actions that they could perform, and he answered each of them according to their understanding.

For instance, a man asked him: “Which action is best?”, The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) answered: “The performance of prayer at its earliest time.”⁶⁸

Another man asked him: “Which deed is the best?”, The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) answered: “Be good and kind to your parents.”⁶⁹

Another man asked him: “Which action is best?”, The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) answered: “To fight in the way of Allah.”⁷⁰

It is quite clear that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) answered every single person based on the individual’s understanding with regards to the specific question and that person’s ability to perform that action.

⁶⁶ Sahih Bukhari 1979

⁶⁷ Sahih Bukhari 1976

⁶⁸ Jami Tirmidhi 170

⁶⁹ Sahih Muslim 85

⁷⁰ Sahih Bukhari 26

Second – Fasting in Shaban

Aisha (Allah be pleased with her) said: “The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) did not observe fast in any month of the year more than in the month of Sha'ban, and used to say: Do as many deeds as you are capable of doing, for Allah will not become weary (of giving you reward), but you would be tired (of doing good deeds) ; and he also said: The deed liked most by Allah is one to which the doer adheres constantly even if it is small”.⁷¹

Third – Fasting in Muharram

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “The most excellent fast after Ramadan is God's month al-Muharram, and the most excellent prayer after what is prescribed is prayer during the night”.⁷²

Fourth and Fifth - The Ninth and Tenth of Muharram

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “That fasting on the Day of Ashura may atone for the sins of the preceding year”.⁷³

Sixth – Fasting on the first ten days of Dhul Hijja

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “No good deeds done on other days are superior to those done on these (first ten days of Dhul Hijja).” Then some companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Not even Jihad?" He replied, "Not even Jihad, except that of a man who does it by putting himself and his

⁷¹ Sahih Muslim 1157

⁷² Sahih Muslim 1163

⁷³ Sahih Muslim 1162

property in danger (for Allah's sake) and does not return with any of those things”.⁷⁴

Seventh – Fasting on the day of Arafat

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Fasting on the day of 'Arafat may atone for the sins of the preceding and the coming years”.⁷⁵

Lubabah bint Harith (may Allah be pleased with her) said: “While the people were with me on the day of `Arafat they differed as to whether the Prophet (ﷺ) was fasting or not; some said that he was fasting while others said that he was not fasting. So, I sent to him a bowl full of milk while he was riding over his camel and he drank it”.⁷⁶

The person performing Hajj will not fast on the day of Arafat (9th Dhul Hijjah). The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “The Best dua (supplication) is the dua on the day of Arafat”.⁷⁷ The pilgrims will engage in dua on the day of Arafat and will be rewarded and those who are not performing the Hajj and are able fast will also be rewarded for their fast. Those who are not in Hajj can still engage in dua.

Eighth - Fasting on the White Days

Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “My friend (the Prophet ﷺ) advised me to observe three things: (1) to fast three days a month; (2) to pray two rak`at of Duha prayer (forenoon prayer); and (3) to pray Witr before sleeping.”⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Sahih Bukhari 969

⁷⁵ Sahih Muslim 1162

⁷⁶ Sahih Bukhari 1988

⁷⁷ Jami Tirmidhi 3585

⁷⁸ Sahih Bukhari 1981

Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated: “The Messenger of Allah said: 'Whoever fasts three days in every month, then that is (like) fasting every day.' Then Allah Mighty and Sublime is He, attested to that in His Book, by revealing: Whoever brings a good deed, shall have ten times the like thereof.⁷⁹ So a day is like ten”.⁸⁰

Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that: The Messenger of Allah said: “Oh Abu Dharr! When you fast three days out of a month, then fast the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth”.⁸¹

Ninth and Tenth – Fasting on Mondays and Thursdays

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was asked about fasting on Monday, whereupon he said: “It is (the day) I was born, and revelation was sent down to me”.⁸²

Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: “The Prophet(ﷺ) used to try to fast on Mondays and Thursdays”.⁸³

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) said that: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “Deeds are presented on Monday and Thursday, and I love that my deeds be presented while I am fasting”.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Surah Anaam Verse 160

⁸⁰ Jami Tirmidhi 762

⁸¹ Jami Tirmidhi 761

⁸² Sahih Muslim 1162

⁸³ Jami Tirmidhi 745

⁸⁴ Jami Tirmidhi 747

Chapter Ten

Forbidden Days for Fasting

First – Fasting at the end of Sha’ban

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “When a half of Sha’ban remains then do not fast”.⁸⁵ Stay away from fasting until Ramadhan begins.

Second – Fasting a day or two days before Ramadhan

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “None of you should fast a day or two before the month of Ramadan unless he has the habit of fasting (Nawafil) (and if his fasting coincides with that day) then he can fast that day”.⁸⁶

Third – Fasting on a Doubtful Day

Ammar bin Yasir (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “Whoever fasts on a day in which there is doubt, then he has disobeyed Abul-Qasim (ﷺ)”.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Jami Tirmidhi 738

⁸⁶ Sahih Bukhari 1914

⁸⁷ Sunan Abu Dawud 2334

Fourth – Fasting on the Days of Eid

Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) forbade fasting on these two days. 'Id-ul-Adha and 'Id-ul-Fitr.⁸⁸

Umar bin Al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) said, Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) has forbidden people to fast on the day on which you break fasting (the fasts of Ramadan) and the day on which you eat the meat of your sacrifices (the first day of `Id ul Fitr and `Id ul-Adha).⁸⁹

Fifth – Days of Tashriq (11th, 12th &13th of Dhul Hijja)

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “The days of Tashriq are the days of eating and drinking and remembering Allah”.⁹⁰

Sixth – Singling out Friday for Fasting.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “None of you should fast on Friday unless he fasts a day before or after it”.⁹¹

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Do not single out the night (preceding) Friday among the nights for prayer and do not single out Friday among days for fasting but only when anyone among you is accustomed to fast (on dates) which coincide with this day (Friday)”.⁹²

⁸⁸ Sahih Muslim 1138

⁸⁹ Sahih Bukhari 1990

⁹⁰ Sahih Muslim 1141

⁹¹ Sahih Bukhari 1985

⁹² Sahih Muslim 1144

Notes