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Issues Affecting Muslims for Ramadan

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ABOUT THE MAJLIS UL ULAMAA (MAJLISTT)

The Majlis ul Ulamaa is a forum to facilitate the collaboration of Islamic Scholars resident and active within Trinidad and Tobago. It seeks to define the authentic Islamic position as it relates to Islam and the Muslim community of the country, considering the various scholastic positions and schools of law. To this end, it deliberates on issues of importance, and defines the Islamic position. The due process is meticulous, spanning the issuing of a draft position paper, inviting stakeholders and public comment and consultations before a final position is issued.

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Bismillaahir Rahmaanir Raheem
Allahumma salli alaa sayyidinaa Muhammadin wa baarik wa sallim

Issues Affecting Muslims for Ramadan

Introduction

In preparation for the upcoming month of Ramadan 1442 (corresponding to April-May 2021) MajlisTT addresses some of the contentious areas that affect practices relating to Ramadan which affect Muslims within the community.

We identify some recurring problematic areas, and emerging questions, which include the following:

1. Sighting of the New Moon to signal the start and end of the month of Ramadan
2. The right time to break the fast
3. When the dua should be said for breaking the fast
4. Praying salaatul Taraweeh
5. Reciting Tasbeeh and Du'a in congregation for salaatul Taraweeh

1. Sighting of the New Moon to signal the start and end of the month of Ramadan

This area (including use of calculations, universal, regional and local sighting, etc.) has been dealt with extensively in a previous publication issued by MajlisTT, and we refer any concerns to that paper, which can be found at <http://majlistt.com/faq/final-papers/2-moon-sighting/>.

2. The right time to break the fast

MajlisTT notes the divergence in practice regarding the specific time to break the fast. Some believe the correct time is before the Adhan, others believe it is immediately after the adhan, and yet others maintain after the adhan we should wait a while before breaking the fast. Some follow the adhan on media channels, others follow the time on the clock or watch (corresponding to MET office times?), and so on.

The Islamic requirement is to break the fast when the sun sets. There is no direct link between breaking the fast and the adhan (for salaatul Maghrib).

Hastening to Break the Fast: We are also instructed in Islam to “hasten to break the fast” (Al-Bukhari #1957, #1856; Muslim #1098; Abu Dawood #2353; Ibn Majah #1698).

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), said: “People will continue in goodness as long as they hasten to break their fast. (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1856)

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said: "The people will remain upon goodness so long as they hasten to break the fast. Hasten to break the fast, for the Jews delay it." (Sunan Ibn Majah Book 9, Number 1698)

This requirement to ‘hasten’ is understood in reference to before the stars become visible – which allows in Trinidad and Tobago an approximately 10-to-15-minute window in which the fast should be broken, before praying salaatul Maghrib (Maraaqi ul Falaah). We should not delay in breaking the fast nor should we break the fast too early.

Breaking the Fast in Congregational Iftar: MajlisTT observes different systems which manifest in different Masajid. Some wait for the adhan to be completed before breaking the fast, while others break the fast before the adhan. The specific preference is up to the Imam to define. Imams need to know the requirements of breaking the fast as outlined. We wish to advise the entire community that *all are correct in this regard*, and all will benefit / reward from the fast Insha Allah. No one will assume blame or jeopardize their fast for either choice.

Using Times stated in Calendars: MajlisTT notes that many organisations in Trinidad and Tobago issue ‘Ramadan Calendars’ to the Muslim community, which includes times to start and break the fast for each day in the month. Some of these use the quoted times issued by the MET Office – which is valid specifically for those MET Office locations in the country. MajlisTT also notes that within Trinidad and Tobago, the longitudinal spread across the country from the eastern-most to the western-most point results in a 6-minute difference in times. This longitudinal spread is not mentioned in these calendars issued. Preliminary responses are that the western-most times are stated in the calendars, or that time is added as a precaution to accommodate the spread.

Unless the calendars explicitly state the timing policy regarding the longitudinal spread, we would urge persons to be sure that the sun has set before they break their fast. By extension, we would encourage the producers of the calendars to explicitly state the timings policy referenced or used in their publications.

Using the Adhan on Media Channels: MajlisTT notes many media channels play the adhan at the time of salaah at the time of breaking the fast, for the month of Ramadan (and even during the rest of the year). We also note these are typically done acknowledging and as mark of commemorating the month of Ramadan for Muslims, and is accompanied by Islamic programming. We firstly commend those channels that recognize the period of Ramadan, and we encourage them to continue with their thoughtful and insightful programs and campaigns during this month and otherwise.

MajlisTT also notes that the timings at which the adhan is played can vary across channels, and the time itself for any one channel can vary – in part from the changing times for break-of-dawn or sunset, and in part to accommodate program scheduling and as a result of other factors. As a result, whilst these media content are good and useful reminders, we wish to remind the Muslim community that *the responsibility for breaking the fast at the right time is on the individual*. If the fast is broken too early (i.e. before the sun fully sets), persons doing so would have to perform

a make-up fast for that day. In light of this, persons should avoid using the adhan on media channels as the basis to start or break the fast, and rather **verify the correct timing on their own basis**.

When it comes to the right time to break the fast, we are guided in the Quran and Ahadith accordingly:

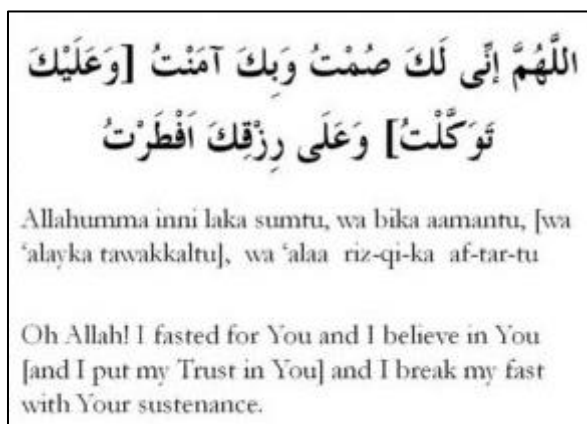
“...and seek what Allah Hath ordained for you, and eat and drink, until the white thread of dawn appear to you distinct from its black thread; then complete your fast till the night appears...” (Quran 2:187)

Hazrat `Umar bin Al-Khattab narrated: “Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "When night falls from this side and the day vanishes from this side and the sun sets, then the fasting person should break his fast.”” (Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari 195)

Hazrat `Umar bin Al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) reported “Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) as saying: When the night approaches and the day retreats and the sun sinks down, then the observer of the fast should break it.” (Sahih Muslim *Book 6, Number 2421*)

3. When the du'a should be said for breaking the fast

The du'a at the point of breaking the fast (or some version of same) is commonly recited.



The du'a at the point of breaking the fast is in the past perfect tense grammatically – some interpret it to be applicable before breaking the fast (similar to *Iqamah* before starting salaah), while others interpret it to be applicable after the fast is broken. In addition, some don't know the wording of the du'a, and by others' making the du'a at the time of breaking the fast, this should help those persons to learn it.

Scholars have divided opinions on this matter. In essence it is good to remember Almighty Allah when breaking the fast - it is one of the times at which du'a is accepted (refer to MajlisTT – *The Performance of Du'a in Islam* at <http://majlistt.com>). **Done either before or after is not wrong** – and neither should be criticized.

In addition, there is another du'a (which is not very popular) which should be said after the fast is broken, as was established in Sunnah:

ذَهَبَ الظَّمَأُ، وَابْتَلَّتِ العُرُوقُ، وَثَبَّتَ الأَجْرُ إِنْ شاءَ اللّهُ تَعَالَى

"The thirst is gone, the veins are moistened, and the reward has been earned, if Allah wills."

[Hadith Abu Dawud]

4. Praying Salaatul Taraweeh

Some persons maintain that salaatul Taraweeh consists of eight (8) rakaat, while others maintain salaatul Taraweeh consists of 20 rakaat, and yet others advocate 36 rakaat and even more.

Those who insist on 8 rakaat use the following hadith:

Abu Salama ibn Abd Ar Rahman (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that he asked `Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her), "How was the prayer of Allah's Messenger ﷺ in Ramadan?" She replied, "He did not pray more than eleven rak'at in Ramadan or in any other month. He used to pray four rak'at—let alone their beauty and length—and then he would pray four rak'at—let alone their beauty and length—and then he would pray three rak'at (witr)." (Bukhari and Muslim)

Those who advocate 20 rakaat say this based (in part) on the following hadith (similar references can be found in Baihaqi, Muatta Malik, Nassai and others):

It is related from Abdullah ibn Abbas (may Allah be please with him): "The Prophet (peace be on him) would pray 20 Rak'at and then witr in the month of Ramadan." (Narrated by Musnad Ibn Abi Shaybah)

In addition, praying 20 rakaat of Taraweeh in congregation was established during the time of Hazrat Umar ibn al Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him), where these were led in congregation daily during the month. These practices established by Hazrat Umar ibn al Khattabⁱ came to be recognised as Sunnah, based on the hadith:

The Prophet (peace be on him) said: "Stick to my Sunnah (my way) and the Sunnah (way) of the khulafa ar-Rashideen (rightly guided Caliphs). Hold fast onto it with your molar teeth." (Abu Dawood and Tirmidhi)

MajlisTT wishes to remind the community that salaatul Taraweeh is not a *fard* (obligatory), but is established Sunnah. The more you worship Almighty Allah, or the more you can worship Him, the better for you. We are told in *ahadith* the following:

The Prophet (peace be on him) said: “Whoever stands for prayer (the night prayer) during Ramadan with iman (faith), hoping for rewards, then all his/her previous sins will be forgiven.” (Bukhari and Muslim)

The Prophet (peace be on him) said: “Whoever draws nearer (to Allah) 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 discharges an obligatory deed in (this month) shall receive the reward of performing seventy obligations at any other time.” (Narrated by Ibn Khuzaymah)

Beyond this, it is recognized that *the general consensus amongst the Sahaba and schools of fiqh is praying 20 rakaat of salaatul Taraweeh*. MajlisTT notes in this regard that Sheik Albani’s position advocating 8 rakaat of Taraweeh was responded to by many scholars, including Darul Ifta. That being said, *those who insist on 8 rakaat of salaatul Taraweeh should be mindful of the quality of the rakaat that were prayed* – which typically ended nearer to the time of Fajr.

During the time of Covid-19 pandemic, we acknowledge the role of the Imams in determining the length of time that the salaatul Taraweeh spans, and ensure that they operate within the parameters of the Health Ordinance protocols.

5. Reciting Tasbeeh and Du’a in congregation

During the intermission between salaatul Taraweeh, it is common for the congregation to recite a tasbeeh followed by a du’a.

There are differences of opinion regarding the congregational recitation tasbeeh followed by a du’a which is typically said between Taraweeh salaah. Some advocate it should be maintained, others hold the view it should be recited quietly, while others hold the position that any form of worship is acceptable.

MajlisTT is of the position that the tasbeeh and du’a are not binding nor specified in sunnah, and it is not compulsory that this specific tasbeeh and du’a are recited. That being said, the wording and meaning of

سُبْحَانَ ذِي الْمُلْكِ وَالْمَلَكُوتِ
سُبْحَانَ ذِي الْعِزَّةِ وَالْعَظَمَةِ وَالْهَيْبَةِ وَالْقُدْرَةِ وَالْكِبْرِيَاءِ وَالْجَبْرُوتِ
سُبْحَانَ الْمَلِكِ الْحَيِّ الَّذِي لَا يَنَامُ وَلَا يَمُوتُ
سُبُّوحٌ قُدُّوسٌ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالرُّوحِ
اللَّهُمَّ اجْرِنَا مِنَ النَّارِ
يَا مُجِيرُ يَا مُجِيرُ يَا مُجِيرُ

“SubHaana dhil-mulki wal-malakoot, subHaana dhil-‘izzati wal-‘azmati wal-haybati wal-qudrati wal-kibri-yaa ‘i wal-jabaroot, subhaanal malikil Hayyil ladhi laa yanaamu wa laa yamoot, subbu-Hun quddusun rabbunaa wa rabbul-malaa ‘ikati war-ruH, Allaahumma ajirnaa minan naar, yaa mujiru, yaa mujiru, yaa mujir”

“Glory be to the Owner of the Kingdom of the earth and the heavens. Glory be to He who commands Respect and Honour and Magnificence & Awe and Power and Greatness and Omnipotence. Glory be to the Sovereign, the Ever-living. Who does not sleep nor die. He is the Most Praised, the Most Holy, Our Lord and the Lord of all the Angels and the Spirit (Jibraeel A.S). O Allah! Save us from the Fire of Hell.
O Protector! O Protector! O Protector!”

both are beautiful and great, so if persons wish to recite the specific tasbeeh and du'a, they are free to do so.

With this in mind, the core issue becomes whether the tasbeeh and du'a should be recited by the congregation collectively, loudly, or not. Some scholars are of the position that any tasbeeh, zikr, du'a or salaah being performed should be done to not disturb others. Others are of the position that collective recitations augers to the benefit of those who may not know it, and therefore it has benefit. Ultimately, *MajlisTT leaves it up to the Imam to decide on this matter based on the common custom of the Jamaat, and knowing the congregation*. It is better for persons to engage in some type of ibadaat instead of sitting idly.

6. Conclusion

MajlisTT recognizes that the period of Ramadan is a special one for Muslims, and one in which Almighty Allah rewards each individual for his/her sacrifice, intention and efforts. The Holy Quran tells us about fasting for Ramadan,

“...Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful.” (Quran 2:185)

We are told in Ahadith:

Abu Huraira (r.a.) reported Allah's Messenger (pbh) as saying: Allah the Exalted and Majestic said: Every act of the son of Adam is for him, except fasting. *It is (exclusively) meant for Me and I (alone) will reward it.*

Abu Huraira (r.a.) reported Allah's Messenger (pbh) as saying: *Every (good) deed of the son of Adam would be multiplied, a good deed receiving a tenfold to seven hundredfold reward.* Allah, the Exalted and Majestic, has 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.* There are two occasions of joy for one who fasts, joy when he breaks it, and joy when he meets his Lord, and the breath (of an observer of fast) is sweeter to Allah than the fragrance of musk. (Sahih Muslim Book 35, Number 2567).

Abu Huraira (r.a.) reported Allah's Messenger (pbh) as saying: “When there comes the month of Ramadan, the gates of mercy are opened, and the gates of Hell are locked, and the devils are chained...” Sahih Muslim Book 13 Number 1)

With these in mind, *we should not get caught up in arguments over non-obligatory acts, but spend our time in humble submission to Almighty Allah*, that we may please Him through our efforts and our sacrifice.

اللَّهُمَّ تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا صِيَامَنَا فِي رَمَضَانَ وَقِيَامَنَا
وَرُكُوعَنَا وَسُجُودَنَا بِرَحْمَتِكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ

"O Allah! Accept from us our fasts in Ramadan and our Qiyaam (nightly prayers) and our bowings and prostrations by Your Grace, O You Who is the Most Gracious!"

ⁱ (refer to Hashiyat al-Dusauqi'ala al-Sharh al-Kabir)