

The Book of the Fast
[Kitāb aṣ-Ṣiyām]



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The fast of Ramaḍān is obligatory for every Muslim who is an adult, of sound mind, and physically capable of fasting. The minor is also commanded to keep it, if he is able to do so. The beginning of its obligatory observance is marked by one of three things: (1) the completion of the month of Sha‘bān, (2) the sighting of the new moon of Ramaḍān, and (3) the presence of clouds or dust in the air on the night of the thirtieth [of Sha‘bān], obscuring the view of the sky.

If someone sees the new moon when he is by himself, he should begin the fast, and, if he is known to be an honest person, the other people should fast on the strength of his word.

When it comes to breaking the fast at the end of Ramaḍān, the evidence of two honest witnesses is required, and a person may not break it if he is the only one to have sighted the new moon [of Shawwāl].

If people have fasted for thirty days, they should break the fast on the strength of the testimony of two witnesses. They should not break the fast, however, if the sky is cloudy or they have only one person’s word, unless they have seen the new moon or completed the maximum number [of days in the month].

If the prisoner of war is dubious about the months, he should make every effort to arrive at a reasonable conclusion, and fast on the basis thereof. Then, if his fast coincides with the month [of Ramaḍān] or one that comes after it, that is sufficient for him [to fulfill his duty], but if it coincides with one that precedes it, that is not sufficient for him [since that year’s Ramaḍān still lies ahead].

Chapter

The Rules Applied to Fastbreakers during Ramaḍān

[Aḥkām al-Muḥtirīn fī Ramaḍān]

Breaking fast during Ramaḍān is permissible for these four groups:

1. The sick person who would be harmed by fasting, and the traveler who is entitled to shorten the ritual prayer. Breaking the fast is preferable for them, and they are obliged to make up for it later. If they keep the fast [while sick or while traveling], they are credited with its observance.
2. The woman who is menstruating and the woman in the state of post-natal impurity. They should break the fast and make up for it later. If they keep it, they are not credited with its observance.
3. The pregnant woman and the wet nurse. If they are afraid for themselves, they should break the fast and make up for it later. If they are afraid for their children, they should break the fast and make up for it later, and they must feed a needy person for each day on which the fast is broken.
4. Someone who is incapable of fasting because of old age, or because of a sickness from which he has no hope of recovering. He must compensate by feeding a needy person for each day on which the fast is broken.

For all others who break the fast, there is no obligation apart from making up for it later. The sole exception is someone who breaks the fast by engaging in sexual intercourse, for he must make up for it later and also emancipate a slave. If he cannot find the means to emancipate a slave, he must fast for two months in succession. If he cannot do that, he must feed sixty paupers. If he copulates and does

not make expiation until he copulates a second time, a single expiation is required, but if he expiates and then copulates, a second expiation is required. Expiation for engaging in sexual intercourse is incumbent on everyone who is obliged to practice abstinence during Ramaḍān.

If someone postpones making up for a broken fast, with a valid excuse, until another Ramaḍān catches up with him, nothing is required of him apart from making up. If he is guilty of negligence, however, he must feed a needy person for each day, as well as making up. If he refrains from making up until he dies, with a valid excuse, nothing is incumbent upon him. If he does so without a valid excuse, however, he is obliged to compensate by feeding a needy person for each day, unless he has made a solemn vow to fast, in which case it must be fulfilled by fasting. The same rule applies to any solemn vow relating to an act of worshipful obedience.



Chapter

Things that spoil the Fast [*Mā yufsid aṣ-Ṣawm*]

If someone does any of the following things, with deliberate intent and while remembering that he is fasting, he spoils the fast:

- Eating, or drinking, or snuffing, or causing a solid or liquid substance to reach into his abdomen from any place whatsoever.
- Masturbating, or kissing, or fondling, or discharging prostatic fluid, or performing a cupping operation, or undergoing a cupping operation.

On the other hand, if he acts while in a state of absent-mindedness, or while subject to coercion, he does not spoil his fast.

His fast is not spoiled in any of the following cases:

- Flies or dust fly into his throat.
- He rinses his mouth or his nose, and some water reaches into his throat.
- He thinks [about sex], and some fluid is sent down or dribbled into his genital gland.
- He experiences an emission of seminal fluid while dreaming.
- Vomiting comes upon him by surprise.

If someone eats when he thinks it is nighttime, but it then becomes clear that it is daytime, he is obliged to make up for breaking the fast. If someone eats when he is dubious about the rising of the dawn, he does not spoil his fast, but if he eats when he is dubious about the setting of the sun, he is obliged to make up for breaking the fast.