

A close-up photograph of a small, white ceramic bowl with a black rim and a colorful floral pattern in red, green, and black. The bowl is filled with several dark brown, glossy dates. In the background, a silver teapot with intricate engravings is visible, slightly out of focus. The lighting is soft, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere.

*Your Fast*

# 4

Allah ﷻ commands Muslims to observe a strict fast for one lunar month every year, namely, *Ramadaan*, which is the fourth pillar of Islam. As the Qur'an states, "O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed for you, just as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous." (*Soorat Al-Baqarah*, 2:183)

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# Fasting Ramadaan

## Definition

Fasting (*siyyaam* or *sawm*) is an act of worship which involves abstaining from all food, drink, sexual activity and anything which is bound to break the fast from dawn (the time of calling to the *Fajr* prayer) till sunset (the time of calling to the *Maghrib* prayer).

## > Virtues of the Month of Ramadaan

*Ramadaan* is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It is the best month of the year and has a number of virtues, including the following:

**1** It was the month in which the greatest and most exalted of all divine books, the Holy Qur'an, was revealed: "It was in the month of *Ramadaan* that the Qur'an was revealed, with clear signs of guidance and a criterion of right and wrong. Therefore, those of you who are resident for the month must fast it." (*Soorat Al-Baqarah*, 2:185)

**2** The Prophet ﷺ said, "When the month of *Ramadaan* comes, the gates of Paradise are opened, the gates of Hellfire are closed and the devils are chained." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree*: 3103, *Saheeh Muslim*: 1079) Thus, it provides an opportunity for the faithful to do their utmost to get closer to Allah by doing righteous deeds and avoiding evil ones.

**3** Whoever fasts during the daylight hours and stands in prayer at night throughout this month will have his past sins forgiven, as the Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever fasts in the month of *Ramadaan*, out of sincere faith and in anticipation of Allah's rewards [in the hereafter], will have all his past

sins forgiven." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree*: 1910, *Saheeh Muslim*: 760) He also said, "Whoever offers the voluntary night prayers with sincere faith and hoping to attain Allah's rewards [in the hereafter] will have all his past sins forgiven." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree*: 1905; *Saheeh Muslim*: 759)

**4** *Laylat-ul-Qadr* (The Night of Decree; also called the Night of Power) occurs in this month. The Qur'an informs us that doing righteous deeds during this night is far better than doing them for many years: "The Night of Power is better than a thousand months." (*Soorat Al-Qadr*, 97:3) A person who prays on this night out of sincere faith and in anticipation of Allah's rewards in the hereafter will obtain Allah's forgiveness of all past sins. This night falls on one of the last ten odd-numbered nights of *Ramadaan* and no one knows its exact time.



## > The Wisdom behind Fasting

Allah ﷻ commands the believers to observe the fast for numerous reasons pertaining to this world and the hereafter. These include the following:

- 1 It helps realise *taqwaa* (righteousness, piety, consciousness of Allah, guarding against evil)

Fasting is an act of worship through which the faithful seek closeness to their Lord by giving up their passionate desires and placing themselves in opposition to physical temptations at all times and places, in secret and in public, knowing that Allah is watching them. As the Qur'an states, "O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed for you, just as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous (*Soorat Al-Baqarah*, 2:183)

- 2 It provides ample training in refraining from sin and wrongdoing

When a fasting person desists from engaging in permissible acts, in total obedience to Allah, he will certainly be able to bring his whims and desires under control, easily avoid sins and will not persist in falsehood and deviation from the truth. The Prophet ﷺ said, "A person who does not desist from deceitful speech and actions [while fasting] must know that Allah is not in need of him leaving his food and drink." (*Sahheeh Al-Bukhaaree*: 1804) This means that those who do not desist from telling lies and deceiving others do not actually perceive the purpose of fasting.

- 3 It helps us remember the needy and the distressed and encourages us to sympathise with them

Because the fasting person experiences the pangs of deprivation and hunger, which are only temporary, he realises the severe effects of such pains on his fellow Muslim brothers and sisters who might be deprived of the essentials of life for a long time and undergo extreme hunger and thirst. This prompts him to feel more compassion for them and help them.



> The fasting person has two moments of joy: one when he breaks his fast and the other one when he meets his Lord.

## > Virtues of Fasting

Fasting has numerous virtues including the following:

**1** A person who fasts during this month, sincerely believing in Allah, in obedience to His commands and is certain of His rewards in the hereafter for doing so, will have all his past sins forgiven. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever fasts in the month of *Ramaḍaan*, out of sincere faith and in anticipation of Allah’s rewards [in the hereafter], will have all his past sins forgiven.” (*Saḥeeḥ Al-Bukhaaree*: 1910; *Saḥeeḥ Muslim*: 760)

**2** The fasting person will experience great joy in the hereafter for the great rewards he will get and the bliss he will enjoy for fasting. The Prophet ﷺ said, “The fasting person has two moments of joy: one when he breaks his fast and the other one when he meets his Lord.” (*Saḥeeḥ Al-Bukhaaree*: 1805; *Saḥeeḥ Muslim*: 1151)

**3** Paradise has a gate called Ar-Rayyaan through which only those who used to fast will enter, as the Prophet ﷺ said, “In Paradise there is a gate called Ar-Rayyaan, through which only those who fast will enter on the Day of Resurrection, and no one but they will enter it. It will be said, ‘Where are those who fasted?’ They will then get up, and none will enter it but them. When they enter, it will be closed, and no one else will enter.” (*Saḥeeḥ Al-Bukhaaree*: 1797; *Saḥeeḥ Muslim*: 1152)

**4** Every act of worship has a certain reward except for fasting, for which Allah, in His boundless bounty and mercy, will reward those who observe it abundantly. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Allah said, ‘All the deeds of the children of Adam are for them except for fasting, which is for Me, and I will reward it.’” (*Saḥeeḥ Al-Bukhaaree*: 1805, *Saḥeeḥ Muslim*: 1151)



> *Ramaḍaan* is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar.

## > Things which Break the Fast

A fasting person must avoid a number of things which are bound to break the fast. They are as follows:

- 1 **Food and drink**, as the Qur'an states, "Eat and drink until you can clearly discern the white thread from the black thread of the dawn, then strictly observe the fast until nightfall." (*Soorat Al-Baqarah*, 2:187)

However, if a person forgets that he is fasting and so he eats or drinks, his fast is still valid and he is not considered sinful for absent-mindedly doing so. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever forgets he is fasting and so he eats or drinks, let him complete his fast for it is Allah who has fed him and given him to drink." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree*: 1831; *Saheeh Muslim*: 1155)

- 2 **Anything that is classified as being in some way similar to eating and drinking**. This includes the following:

- Injections which have some nutritional value: These serve to supply the body with the necessary minerals and nutrients it needs, hence their similarity to eating and drinking.
  - Having a blood transfusion: Blood is like the body's transportation system, and as it circulates, it delivers oxygen and nutrients throughout the body, hence its resemblance to eating and drinking.
  - Smoking in all its forms renders the fast void, for inhaling smoke introduces numerous toxic substances into the body.
- 3 **Sexual activity** in which a man puts his penis into a woman's vagina, whether or not this results in ejaculation.

- 4 **Deliberate seminal emission** through sexual contact, masturbation or any other means.

However, wet dreams, sexually exciting dreams that result in an orgasm, do not break the fast.

A man may kiss his wife if he knows he can easily control himself and does not engage in intercourse or any act that may lead to seminal emission.

- 5 **Deliberate vomiting**: Involuntary vomiting, however, does not break the fast. The Prophet ﷺ said, "If a person vomits unintentionally while observing a fast, he does not have to make up for this by fasting another day; however, if he deliberately vomits, then he must fast another day for breaking his [obligatory] fast." (*Sunan At-Tirmidhee*: 720; *Sunan Abu Daawood*: 2380)

- 6 **Beginning of menstruation or post-natal bleeding regardless** of the time or part of the day when such bleeding begins. Whenever such bleeding begins, even if it takes place just before sunset, a woman's fast is automatically broken. If a menstruating woman becomes clean after dawn, her fast is also broken. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Isn't it true that a woman can neither pray nor fast during her menses?" (*Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree*: 1850)

Nevertheless, apart from menstrual bleeding and post-natal bleeding, abnormal uterine bleeding which some women experience does not prevent them from fasting.

## > Those Who Are Exempt from Fasting

To make it easy for people, Allah ﷻ has exempted some of them from fasting. They are:

**1 Sick people** whose medical condition is bound to be further worsened by fasting are permitted to break the fast but must make up for the missed fasts after *Ramadaan*.

**2 People who cannot possibly** observe a fast due to old age or sick people for whom there is no hope of recovery may also break the fast but must feed a needy person for every day missed, by giving him 1.5 kg of the staple food common in the country.

**3 Travellers**, while moving from one place to another or during their temporary residence which lasts less than four days, are allowed to break the fast but have to make up for the fast days they have missed after *Ramadaan*. As the Qur'an states, "But those of you who are sick or are on a journey must fast an equal number of other days. Allah wants ease for you, not hardship." (*Soorat Al-Baqarah*: 185)

**4 Menstruating women and women experiencing post-natal bleeding** are forbidden to fast but must make up an equal number of days after *Ramadaan*. Even if they fast, it will not be valid. (See page 98)

**5 Pregnant and nursing women** are permitted to break the fast if they fear it would be dangerous for them or for their babies if they fast. They must, however, make up for the fast days they have missed after *Ramadaan*.



## The Islamic Ruling Regarding Those who Deliberately Break the Fast

Breaking the fast without a valid excuse is a grave sin which clearly testifies to its doer's disobedience to Allah ﷻ. Therefore, those who commit such a sin must sincerely repent to Allah in addition to making up for the fast days they have omitted. Those who engage in sexual intercourse during the day in *Ramadaan* must, in addition to expressing sincere repentance and making up that day, expiate for doing so by freeing a Muslim slave, hence the importance Islam attaches to liberating people from the shackles of servitude. If they cannot find any slaves to set free, as is the case today, they must fast for two consecutive months; if they are unable to do so, then they have to feed sixty poor people.

### > Voluntary Fasting

Muslims are required to observe a strict month-long fast once a year, that is, during the month of *Ramadaan*. They are also recommended, as long as they are able to do so, to fast on other days in order to gain more rewards. These days include the following:

- 1 The day of '*Aashuraa*', as well as a day before it or after it: '*Aashuraa*' is the tenth day of the lunar month of *Muharram*, the first month of the Islamic calendar. It is the very day Allah ﷻ saved Moses ﷺ and drowned Pharaoh and his army. A Muslim fasts it as an expression of gratitude to Allah for saving Moses and to follow in the footsteps of our Prophet ﷺ who not only fasted on this day but also asked his companions to fast a day before it or a day after it. (*Musnad Ahmad*: 2154). When he was asked about fasting on it, he replied, "It expiates [the sins committed in] the previous year." (*Saheeh Muslim*: 1162)
- 2 The Day of '*Arafah*': '*Arafah*' is the ninth day of the lunar month of *Dhul-Hijjah*, the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar. On this day, pilgrims who perform the *hajj*, the annual Muslim pilgrimage, gather in the wide open plain of '*Arafah* and engage in invoking Allah, praising Him and glorifying Him. '*Arafah*' is the best day of the year, and those who are not performing the *hajj* may fast on it. When the Prophet ﷺ was asked about fasting on this day, he replied, "It atones for the sins committed the preceding year and the coming year." (*Saheeh Muslim*: 1162)
- 3 Six days of *Shawwaal*: *Shawwaal* is the tenth month of the Islamic calendar. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever fasts in *Ramadaan* then follows it up with six days of the month of *Shawwaal* will obtain the rewards of fasting for the entire year." (*Saheeh Muslim*: 1164)





## > The Festival of Fast Breaking ('Eed-ul-Fitr)

**Festivals represent apparent rituals of religion.** When the Prophet ﷺ arrived in Madeenah, he found that the people there had set aside two days in the year for fun. He asked them, "What are these two days?" "We used to play and have fun on these days before the advent of Islam," they replied. The Prophet ﷺ then said, "Allah has given you two better days: 'Eed-ul-Fitr and 'Eed-ul-Adhaa." (Sunan Abu Daawood: 1134) Explaining that festivals represent the religion of their followers, he once observed, "Every nation has a festival, and this is our festival." (Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree: 909; Saheeh Muslim: 892)

### The Meaning of 'Eed in Islam

'Eed is a day of festivity and rejoicing. On this day, Muslims express their happiness and their gratitude to Allah for guiding them to the truth and for assisting them in completing the fast of *Ramadaan*. They share happiness with everyone by putting on their best clothes, giving charity to the poor and the needy and engaging in permissible celebrations and festivities which make everyone happy and remind them of Allah's favours upon them.

### Muslim Festivals

There are only two annual festivals in Islam, and Muslims must not celebrate any other day apart from them. They are: (1) The Festival of Fast Breaking ('Eed-ul-Fitr), which is celebrated on the first day of the lunar month of *Shawwaal*, and (2) the Festival of Sacrifice ('Eed-ul-Adhaa), which is celebrated on the tenth day of the lunar month of *Dhul-Hijjah*.



## The Festival of Fast Breaking ('Eed-ul-Fitr )

'Eed-ul-Fitr falls on the first day of the lunar month of *Shawwaal*, marking the end of the month-long *Ramadaan* fast. Just as fasting during the month of *Ramadaan* is an act of worship, celebrating 'Eed-ul-Fitr is also an act of worship whereby Muslims express their gratitude to Allah for enabling them to perform this act of worship and for completing His grace upon them. As the Qur'an states, "You should complete the number of days and proclaim Allah's greatness for the guidance He has given you so that you will be thankful." (*Soorat Al-Baqarah*, 2:185)

### What Should Be Done On the 'Eed Day?

1

#### Offering the 'Eed Prayer:

Islam stresses that the 'Eed prayer should be performed. In fact, it was one of those practices which the Prophet ﷺ observed consistently and even encouraged not only men but also women and children to observe. Its time starts after the sun has risen to the length of a spear above the horizon (just over 1 metre) and lasts until it has crossed the meridian.

**Description:** The 'Eed prayer consists of two units (*rak'aat*; singular *rak'ah*) in which the *imaam* recites the Qur'an loudly, after which he delivers a sermon (*khuṭbah*) in two parts. This prayer contains several *takbeeraat* (singular *takbeerah*, one's saying *Allaahu akbar*) at the beginning of each unit more than the ordinary prayer: The *imaam* says *Allaahu akbar* and, before he starts reciting the Qur'an, repeats the same utterance six more times; also, after rising from the prostrate position to the standing position to perform the second unit, he repeats the same utterance five more times in addition to the *takbeer* he has recited while rising to the second unit. The worshippers follow the *imaam* in these movements, doing and saying exactly the same.



2

**Paying *Zakaat-ul-Fitr*:** Allah has enjoined *zakaat-ul-fitr* (literally, the purifying obligatory charity of the breaking of the fast) on anyone who possesses a day's and night's worth of food. It consists of one *saa'* of the most common staple food of the country, be it rice, wheat or dates, and must be given to the Muslim poor and needy so that there would be no person in need of food on the *'Eed day*. It is permissible, however, to pay the value of *zakaat-ul-fitr* in money instead if it appears that this will be more beneficial to the poor.

**Time of Its Payment:** *Zakaat-ul-fitr* is to be paid from the time the sun sets on the last day of *Ramadaan* up to the time of the *'Eed* prayer. It may, however, be paid a day or two before the *'Eed* day as well.

**The amount of *zakaat-ul-fitr*** is one *saa'* of the usual foods tufts of the country, be it rice, wheat or dates. One *saa'* is equivalent to approximately 3 kg.

**A Muslim** must pay it for himself and all the persons he is legally bound to support, such as his wife and children. It is recommended to pay it on behalf of an unborn child.

The Prophet ﷺ enjoined it as "atonement for any obscene language used while observing the fast and for providing food for the needy. It would be accepted as *zakaat* from those who pay it before the *'Eed* prayer, but it would be considered as mere *sadaqah* (voluntary charity) for those who pay it after the *'Eed* prayer."

(*Sunan Abu Daawood*: 1609)





**3** **Muslims on this occasion** spread joy and merriment to all family members, young and old, men and women, providing all possible types of lawful amusements. They wear their best and most beautiful clothes and eat and drink, as doing so is an act of worship. Fasting on this day is strictly forbidden.



> Muslims leaving the mosque after offering the 'Eid prayer.

**4** **They recite the takbeer** on this special occasion on the night preceding the 'Eed day and on the way to the 'Eed prayer, and continue doing so until the *imaam* appears for the 'Eed prayer starts, expressing gratitude to Allah ﷻ for enabling them to complete the fast of *Ramadaan*. The Qur'an states, "He wants you to complete the prescribed period and to glorify Him for having guided you, so that you may be thankful." (*Soorat Al-Baqarah*, 2:185)

**The manner of *takbeer* pronounced on this occasion is as follows:** *Allaahu akbar, Allaahu akbar, laa ilaaha ill allaah, Allaahu akbar, Allaahu akbar, walillaahil-hamd* (Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest; there is no god worthy of worship except Allah; Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest; all praise belongs to Allah).

One may also recite the following: *Allaah uakbaru kabeeran, wal-hamdu lillaahi katheeran, wa subhaan-Allaahi bukratan wa aaseelaa* (Allah is the Greatest; His is the abundant praise, and glory be to Him day and night).

Men generally pronounce the *takbeer* aloud, but without disturbing other people; women, however, pronounce it quietly.