

Fasting – the Means to Attain Taqwa

The saying of Allaah, the Most High:

"O you who believe, **fasting** (*Siyaam*) is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, in order for you to attain **Taqwa** (piety, righteousness); [Fasting] for a fixed number of days. But if anyone of you is **ill** (*Ma-reed*) or on a **journey** (*Safar*), the same number (of missed days, should be made up) from other days..." [al-Baqarah, 2: 183, 184]

Explanation (Sharh):

This *Aayah* (verse of the Qur'aan) indicates that **Siyaam** (fasting) is legislated in the *Sharee'ah* (Divine Law of Allah); and that it is **Waajib** (obligatory) upon (the members of) this *Ummah* (Muslim community) - just as it was *Waajib* (obligatory) upon the previous nations. Therefore, anyone who reaches the age of responsibility (*Tak-leef*) is obligated to fast.

Allaah, the Most High, made clear that the fasting intended here is the fast of the month of **Ramadaan** - by His saying: "...the month of *Ramadaan* in which was revealed the Qur'aan, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong). So, whoever of you sights (the crescent on the first night of) the month (of *Ramadaan*, i.e. whoever is present at his home, not traveling), he *must* observe fasting." [Qur'aan, 2:185]

Allaah addressed the **believers** specifically and taught them about the obligation of *Siyaam* (fasting) since they are able to carry the *responsibility due to their Emaan* (faith), unlike the *Kaafiroon* (those who have no *Emaan*) [and are therefore unable to carry this *responsibility*].

As for Allaah's saying: "...**as it was prescribed for those before you...**" - it is (intended) to *minimize* the [feeling of the] **Ma-shaq-qah** (difficulty) of fasting upon them, by informing them that it was also prescribed upon those (nations) before them; so if (this fasting) was so difficult that it is beyond one's ability to fulfill, they would not have been required to do it.

The saying of Allaah, the Most High: '**...in order for you to attain Taqwa (piety, righteousness)**' - clarifies the fact that *Siyaam* (fasting) gives the *Mu'min* (believer) the aptitude or ability to obey (Allah), by fulfilling the commands (*Ma'moo-raat*) and abandoning the prohibitions (*Man-hee-yaat*). Hence, *as-Siyaam* (fasting) makes the servant (of Allah) suited to observe *at-Taqwa* (piety, righteousness). And this (*Taqwa*) is a **Faa'idah 'A-dheemah** (very great benefit), in addition to the **Ajr 'A-dheem** (tremendous reward) that the fasting person will receive (for fasting).

The saying of Allaah, the Most High: '**...[Fasting] for a fixed number of days...**' - is also intended to minimize [the feeling of difficulty] upon the soul (*Nafs*) of the believer by informing him that this fast (of *Ramadaan*) which has been made obligatory upon him is not for (a period of) **months** nor **years**. Rather, it is only for a fixed number of **days**, i.e. thirty (30) days, or twenty-nine (29) days. Likewise, in order to eliminate any hardship (*Ha-raj*) [from those obligated to fast], He (Allaah, the Most High) allowed the **sick person** (*Ma-reed*) and the **traveler** (*Mu-saa-fir*) to break his fast until he returned from the journey or recovered from the sickness, at which time he will fast the missed days.

Guidance and Instructions (*Ir-shaa-daat*) for the Teacher (*Mu-rab-bee*)

1. Read the *Aayah* (verse) in a *slow rhythmic* tone while the listeners *repeat* it with you in a low tone, until you see that they (the listeners) have **memorized** it or almost done so.
2. Read the *Sharh* (explanation) - line by line – making clear for the listeners that which they have not understood or that which is difficult for them.
3. *Teach* them (the listeners) that the **reality** of fasting (*Ha-qee-qa-tus-Si-yaam*) is abstinence from **eating** (*al-Akl*), **drinking** (*ash-Shurb*) and **sexual relations** (*al-Jimaa'*) - from the break of dawn until the setting of the sun; and that **an-Niyyah** (intention) is a pre-condition (*Shart*) for its validity. *An-Niyyah* means the *resolve* of the **heart** to fast as an act of obedience (*Taa'ah*) to Allah, the Most High, or as a means of getting near (*Ta-qar-rub*) to Him.
4. *Teach* them that the woman in **menses** (*al-Haa'id*) and the woman in **childbed confinement** (*an-Nafsa'*) are similar to the sick person (*al-Mareed*) who fears death for himself [if he fasts]. Hence, he is forbidden to fast. Likewise, these two (women) are **forbidden** to fast while in the condition of menses (*Haid*) and childbed confinement (*Nifaas*). But, when they become clean (from such condition), they are to make up the number of days (of fasting) which they had not fasted.
5. *Teach* them that the sick person (*Ma-reed*) **who does not expect recovery** (from his illness) and the **elderly** person may *abstain* from fasting and *feed* (a poor person) a kilo (approximately 2.2 pounds) of rice [or something from the *staple food* of the people] for every day (of the fast). And similar is the case of the **breast-feeding** mother (*al-Mur-di'*) and the **pregnant** woman (*al-Haa-mil*).

Note:

It is reported from **Ibn 'Abbaas** (radiya-llahu an-huma) - concerning the *Aa-yah*: "...as for those who can fast with difficulty (e.g. an old man or woman) they have (a choice either to fast or) to feed a poor person (for every day missed)..." -- that he said: "Permission has been given to the **elderly man** and the **elderly woman** in this matter - while they might be able to fast (with difficulty) - to *abstain* from fasting, if they want to, and (instead) *feed a poor person* for each day (not fasted); **and there is no Qa-daa'** (making up the missed days) required for them... And **pregnant woman** and **breast-feeding woman** - if they have fear (of some harm from fasting) may *abstain* from fasting and *feed a poor person* for each day (not fasted)." [The *Is-naad* (chain of narrators) is *Qa-wee* (strong). Reported by al-Baihaqee. 4/230]

Ibn 'Abbaas (radiya-llaahu an-huma) is also reported to have said: "If the **pregnant woman** fears for herself (some harm from fasting), or the **breast-feeding woman** (fears) for her child during *Ramadaan* (due to fasting), they may *abstain* from fasting and *feed a poor person* in place of every day (not fasted); and they are **not required to make up for (the missed days of) fasting**." [Reported by at-Tabaree, no. 2758. Shaykh al-Albaanee (Rahima-hu-llah) said that it is *Saheeh* (authentic) according to the conditions (of authenticity) of Muslim. See: '*Irwaah' al-Ghaleel*', 4/19]

It is reported from **Naafi'** (rahimahu-llah, the *Mawlaa* and student of **Ibn 'Umar**, Radiya-llaahu an-humaa) that he said: "A daughter of Ibn `Umar was married to a man from the (tribe of) Quraish. She (the daughter of Ibn 'Umar) was **pregnant** and was struck by *thirst* during (the fast of) *Ramadaan*. So, **Ibn `Umar** (radiya-llaahu an-huma) ordered her to *break* (the fast) and *feed a poor person* for every day (not fasted)." [The *Is-naad* (chain of narrators) is *Saheeh* (authentic). Reported by ad-DarQutnee 2/207/15. See: '*Irwaah' al-Ghaleel*', 4/20, by Shaykh al-Albaanee (Rahimahu-llaah)]