

Hasten to Break Fast

The Lawgiver highly recommended rule that the fast be broken as soon as the sun sets is certain. Although newspapers, in their daily almanac, mention the time of sunset and sunrise, one should be strongly advised to look through the window to make sure the sun has set. For example, you might hear that “Today's sunrise is at 6:50 a.m. and sunset at 4:58 p.m.,” and when you look outside, you find that there is still light outside. By sunset it is meant the disappearance of the sun from the western horizon.

In the books of Bukhari and Muslim, the Messenger of Allah (saas) said:

“The people will always remain in a good state of mind and body (during fast) so far as they hurry in the breaking of the fast and delay the sahuur.”

It is recommended also to break the fast with fresh dates, *rutub*, and in odd numbers, or *tamr*, regular table or supermarket dates, or water. If dates are not available, any fruit will do. If there is no food or drink to break the fast with, intend in your heart to break fast, and whenever food is available you should eat.

In a report by Anas (raa), he said:

“The Prophet (saas) used to break fast with fresh, ripe dates *rutub*, before he offered his Maghrib prayer. If they were not available, he would break with regular dates, or drink water if there were no dates.” (Abu Dawud Tirmidhi)

In this report, there is an indication that with the Messenger of Allah (saas) breaking fast precedes evening prayer, *Maghrib*, as if to say the last meal before fast precedes the morning

prayer. Likewise, the first meal at the time of *iftaar*, the fast breaking meal, precedes evening prayer, *Maghrib*. Hence, the procedure at *Iftaar* goes like this: break with a light meal, preferably dates, make *Iqamah* for Maghrib prayer, then take your regular meal.

The meal, may be taken with the family at home, or friends and relatives may be invited to the *Iftaar* as we shall see that charitable works are highly recommended in the month of Ramadan. Over the years phenomenon have evolved in different masjid, and Islamic Centers in the United States of America and elsewhere, where arrangements are made by the believers to break fast in *jama'ah* in the masjid. These gatherings are excellent and are encouraged as they lead to Taraweeh prayer in *Jamaa`ah* in the masjid.

Supplications during and at Break Time

The Lawgiver has recommended that the fasting person take the opportunity on this occasion and beseech Allah during the period of fasting, especially around the hour of breaking fast, *iftaar*. He should request diligently, whatever he or she desires, from the Owner of creation, *Rabbil Alameen*.

In the book of Ibn Maja, Abdullah bin 'Amru bin 'Al-As (raa) reported that the Messenger of Allah (saas) said:

“Indeed, as to the faster, about the time he breaks his fast, his *du'a*, (supplication) will not be turned away by Allah.”

This hadith reveals a special privilege afforded only to the servant who observes fasting and at the hour he brings his fasting to a close. Each fasting person has the right to supplication and the right that it will be answered, a promise from the One who never reneges on His promises.

However, granting the faster's *du'a* request falls within the conditions of *du'a*. That is, whatever you ask Allah (SWT), He will grant it in His own time, and when he knows that granting your request will not lead to your ruin. Do not ask of Him something unlawful.

In a report by Tirmidhi (raa), the Messenger of Allah (saas) has been reported as saying:

“There are three categories of people whose *du'a* (supplications) will not be rejected: the person who observes the fast until he breaks, a just ruler, and the person who has been wronged.”

This citation supports the previous one, while adding that when prayers are offered during fasting, supplications are highly encouraged.

In addition to the faster, a ruler's acts of justice weigh heavily on the scale of good deeds (*mizaaan*). This is the person whose pronouncements, orders and decrees affects the lives of others. The ruler may be a political leader, a judge, or a community leader who does not abuse the power and authority invested in him. If any one of them makes a request, Allah (SWT) will swiftly grant it.

Conversely, on the reverse side, if the faster did not observe fasting properly, or the ruler abuses the power invested in him, their supplications will not only be turned away unanswered, but will incur the wrath of Allah.

The third person in the Hadith is *al-mazluum*. This is an individual who has been wronged, such as a victim of a crime against himself or his property, or if his civil rights have been violated, or he is a victim of fraud or white collar crime. If such a person raises his hands and asks Allah (SWT) for help, his or her prayer will be granted.

Examples of Supplications During Ramadan

It has been reported that the Messenger of Allah (saas) used to say the following:

“Allahumma Inne as aluka birahma - tikal Latee wasi'at kulla shain an Taghfirale”

(O Allah, I request You by Your mercy that encompasses everything in the creation to forgive me.)

Also:

“Dhahaba Zamau, wabta lati'uruq, wa Thabatal Ajru In Sha Allah.”

(The thirst is gone and the throats are wet again and the reward is established, Allah willing.)

Also:

“Allahumma laka sumtu wabika a mantu wa 'alaika Tawakaltu, wa'ala rizquka aftartu.”

(O Allah, I fasted for Your sake. I believed in You and relied on You and I break my fast on your provisions.)

The above supplications have been reported from the Messenger of Allah (saas). Anyone of them may be said before you put the date or water in your mouth. Speaking of *iftar*, it is recommended to be in a state of purity, (*wudu*) before *iftar*, so that when the *adhan* is called for *Maghrib* prayer, anyone who hears the *adhan* should breakfast immediately at the sound of *Allahu Akbar* and should not wait until the *adhan* is completed. The caller will break after *adhan*.

Avoidance of the Things that Contradict the Spirit of Fasting

Fasting is one of the best acts of worship. It is mandated by Allah (SWT) to purify the soul along with the practice of good deeds. Thus the faster ought to be aware of acts or behaviors that may spoil his fast so that he or she will attain the highest benefit physically and spiritually.

Fasting is not only restraining oneself from fast-breakers - food, drink and sex - that restrain only the mouth and the private parts. Every limb (*jawarih*) must be restrained. The tongue must desist from slander and back-biting. The eyes must restrain themselves from any unlawful look. The hand must not touch or take what does not belong to it. The ears must not listen to idle talk, gossip, lyrics and notes that contain obscene and indecent things; the nose must fast also by not sniffing, smelling unlawful things. The feet must fast by not going to places where sinful acts are propagated. When you eat *sahuur* and *iftar*, make sure the food on the table has been obtained lawfully. If the servant has observed the fast in these terms and acted accordingly, he or she will have gained positively by Ramadan and will receive the maximum reward.

Hence, fasting is a state of mind that transcends the physical restraint. In a hadith by Abu Hurairah, the Messenger of Allah (saas) said:

“It is not fasting, just to restrain from food and drink, instead the fast is to cease from idle talk (*laghw*), obscenity, and should anyone insult or provoke you, or act ignorantly towards you, respond to it by saying, ‘I am fasting, I am indeed fasting.’ ” (Ibn Khuzaimah)

In another citation reported by Abu Hurairah (raa) the Messenger of Allah, (saas), said:

“He who does not stop from false talk or stop from acting upon false talk, Allah will have no need that he abstain from his food and drink.” (Bukhari)

Again, in the same spirit, the Messenger of Allah (saas) said:

“Many an observer of fasting will not receive from his fasting any reward but the pain of hunger, and many a night worshipper will not receive any reward from his prayer but the loss of sleep.” (Nasaie and Hakim)

These three *ahadith* are evidence that the most important thing in the eyes of the Lawgiver is not merely physically restraining from the obvious food and drink, but the total commitment of the servant's body and soul to the letter and spirit of fasting. The curfew of the body and mind during the state of fasting enables the person who has fasted in the true spirit of Ramadan to have the necessary requirements to withstand the turbulence of life for the next eleven months.

When the Messenger of Allah (saas) said in the hadith,

“Allah will have no need...” (Bukhari)

He was indicating the depth or seriousness of this case. If you fail the test, Allah will have no need that he abstained... in that test. If Allah rejects the test, who else will accept it? Nobody! Hence, the pain of hunger and the burning of thirst will go unrewarded.

Oral Hygiene

It is recommended to take care of the mouth, teeth and gums all the time, and more so during fasting. This can be achieved by the use of *siwaak*, a special stick or root (from *Arak* tree) that is used to cleanse the teeth and strengthen the gums. Although the best *siwaak* is the one called *al-Arak* produced in Hijaz, in Arabia, it will suffice to use anything that will cleanse the teeth and remove the stain and refresh the mouth, like *halaal* toothpaste. In hadith by Abu Hurairah, the Prophet (saas) said:

“Were not it because of fear of burdening my community (Ummah) I would have commanded them to use *siwaak* (brush their teeth with a chewing stick) before every ablution.” (Malik)

In another hadith by 'Aishah (raa) the Messenger of Allah (saas) said:

“*Siwaak* cleanses the mouth and pleases Allah.” (Ahmad).

Yet, in another report by Amir bin Rabeelah (raa), he said:

“I saw the Messenger of Allah (saas) on numerous occasions chewing *siwaak* while fasting.” (Tirmidhi)

In the first and second hadith, the importance of oral hygiene is underscored and encouraged on every occasion: before *wudu* for regular prayer, before reciting *Al-Qur'an*, before or after sleeping, when the mouth odor changes and, of course, during fasting. The third hadith indicates the Prophet (saas) took care of his teeth during the time of fasting.

The Use of Toothpaste

Many scholars consider the use of toothpaste during the period of fasting as undesirable (*makruuh*), because it is a thorough or rather extensive way of cleaning the teeth. This would have been all right if not because of the fasting. The reason why thorough cleaning is considered makruuh is because of the fear of swallowing water as one attempts to rinse and flush out the taste and soapy residue of toothpaste. This fear is justified by hadith reported by Laqit bin Sabrah (raa) that the Messenger of Allah said:

“Perfect your Wudu, clean between your fingers and sniff water thoroughly unless you are fasting.” (Abu Dawud and Nasa'e)

Categories of Fasters

The faster excels in the degree and the depth of his fasting in proportion to the intent and in the way he communicates with Allah as well adheres to the rules of fasting. Ibn Rajab (raa) stated the people who observe the fasting are two categories.

One who abstains from food and drink and sexual desires for the sake of Allah. in so doing, he desires a return from Allah in a form of paradise, *Jannah*. He resembles a businessman who trades, bargains and deals with Allah (swt). Allah in turn will not neglect nor deny him his due reward. For no one whoever deals or trades with Allah ever lost a thing. Instead, the person will be rewarded a great deal more. The Messenger (saas) told a man:

“When you abstain from anything for the fear of Allah, He will substitute you something better.” (Ahmed)

The faster will receive in paradise what he wishes of food, drinks and desires. Allah (swt) sates:

“Eat ye and drink ye with full satisfaction because of a (good) that ye sent before you in the days that are gone.”

(Al-Qur`an,69:24)

According to Imam Mujahid this verse refers to the righteous faster. In a hadith the Messenger saw Abdur Rahman bin Samrah in a vision, he said:

“I saw a man from my community lolling his tongue for thirst, whenever he comes near to water fountain he is denied a drink and sacked, then fasting of Ramadan came and gave him water and quenched him.” (Tabra-nee)