

# Etiquette of Fasting No. 4

## A. Categories of People Who Are Exempted From Fasting For Valid Reasons

### 1. Traveler

The Qur'an says, "And whoever is sick or on a journey (must make up for the fast on) a number of other days" (Q.2:185). Actually, the traveler has a choice: to fast or not to fast. Hamza b. 'Amr al-Aslami (may Allah be pleased with him!) asked the Prophet ﷺ, "Shall I fast while I am on a journey?" He ﷺ said, "Fast if you wish or break your fast if you wish" (Reported by Ahmād).

### 2. Sick Person

"And whoever is sick or on a journey (must make up for the fast on) a number of other days" (Q.2:185). The āyah is clear proof that illness is a valid, legitimate reason to break the fast. We advise, however, that the sick person consult first with his or her physician and then a Muslim scholar before making the decision to fast or not.

### 3. Women in Menses & Post-partum Bleeding

The proof of this is the words of the Prophet ﷺ, when he addressed some women among whom were a few of his wives: "Is it not that a menstruating woman does not pray or fast?" They replied, "Yes!" (Reported by Muslim). Islamic Law (*Sharia*) treats post-natal blood like menses, both of which are ritual impurities (*najāsāt*). Therefore, the same ruling applies to the woman in post-natal bleeding as the one in menses: she is not to fast during that state of ritual impurity.

### 4. Elderly People

Al-Bukhāri reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, "The elderly male and female, who are unable to fast, must feed in lieu of it a poor person each day (of Ramadān)."

### 5. Pregnant Woman & Nursing Mother

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Truly Allah, the Almighty, the Great, has exempted the traveler from fasting and half of the ritual prayer (i.e. Zuhr, 'Aṣr, and Ḥaḍīd), the pregnant woman, and the nursing mother from fasting" (Reported by at-Tirmidhi).

## B. Types of Compensation for Categories of Persons Who Break Their Fast in Ramadān

### 1. Al-Qadā' (Making up for fasts missed by fasting said number of days after Ramadān)

This compensation is not obligatory at once, that is, immediately after the Ramadān fast has ended. Ā'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her!), the wife of the Prophet ﷺ, narrated that "I would have fast to make up for in Ramadān, but I did not do it (*qadā'*) except in [the month of] Sha'bān [in the following year]" (Reported by Muslim). In the *ḥadīth* is proof that it is permissible to delay *qadā'* of Ramadān fast with or without any excuse. Nevertheless, to hasten to perform the *qadā'* is preferable, according to some scholars, based on the following āyah: "And hasten to the forgiveness of your Lord" (Q. 3:133).

### FAQ

Q. What is the state of someone who died before performing his or her *qadā'* of Ramadān fast missed? Can

someone else fulfill it on behalf of the deceased?

A. The correct thing to do is to pay *fidyah* ('ransom'; see below) on behalf of the deceased who did not perform the *qadā'* fast of Ramadān. 'Amrah (may Allah be pleased with her!) narrated that her mother died before doing *qadā'* for her missed fast in Ramadān, so she asked Ā'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her!), wife of the Prophet ﷺ: "Can I perform *qadā'* fast on her behalf?" She replied, "No! You must give charity [i.e. *fidyah*] on her behalf: for every day half a *ṣā'* [see *Zakātū-l-Fiṭr* below] to a poor person" (Reported by at-Ṭahāwī).

### 2. Al-Kaffārah ('Atonement')

Only one category of people is required by *Sharia* to perform *kaffārah* for breaking the Ramadān fast deliberately. That person is the one who intentionally and willfully had marital intercourse with his wife during the fast in Ramadān. A man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, "I am perished!" The Prophet ﷺ asked, "What has caused you to perish?" The man replied, "I had sex with my wife (during the day of the fast in Ramadān)." The Prophet ﷺ said to him, "Can you free a slave?" He answered, "No." The Prophet ﷺ said to him, "Can you fast two consecutive months?" He answered, "No." The Prophet ﷺ said to him, "Can you feed 60 poor persons?" He answered, "No." The Prophet ﷺ then ordered him to sit, while he went inside his house. He ﷺ emerged shortly thereafter with a bag of dates and said to the man: "Give this out in charity." The man replied, "But there is no poorer home (in the city of Medina) than mine!" The Prophet ﷺ laughed until the whiteness of his teeth was visible and said to him, "Take it! Feed your family with it!" (Reported by al-

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Bukhāri). Another narration of the same *hadīth* states that the Prophet ﷺ ordered him to make *qadā'* for the fast that he had spoiled.

The foregoing *hadīth* stipulates a sequence in the observance of *kaffārah*, namely, i) freeing a slave, ii) fasting two consecutive months, iii) feeding 60 poor persons, and iv) charity to the poor in that order, hinging on the ability or means of the individual to carry it out.

As for the man's wife, according to some scholars, she is not required to make *kaffārah* in this situation, since the Prophet ﷺ gave a ruling on an act that occurred between the man and his wife, but he did not impose except one *kaffārah*, which was incumbent on the husband. Allah knows best.

### **3. Al-Fidyah ('Ransom' Or The Feeding Of A Poor Person A Day For Each Fast Not kept in Ramaḍān For Certain Categories Of People)**

The people who are required to perform *fidyah* as a compensation for breaking their fast in Ramaḍān are the elderly male and female, the pregnant woman, and the nursing mother. Almighty Allah says in the Qur'an, "And those who able to keep it (the fast), (for them is) *fidyah*: the feeding of a poor person")" (Q. 2:187).

Ibn 'Abbās (may Allah be pleased with him!) commented on the āyah, stating that the ruling was abrogated for those who were able to fast but paid the *fidyah* in lieu of fasting before Ramaḍān, but it remained valid for the elderly male and female, if they are unable to fast, and the pregnant woman and the nursing mother, if they fear for their health or their fetuses or offspring respectively, they break the fast and, as a compensation, feed a poor person each day for the number of fasts missed in Ramaḍān (Reported by al-

Bayhaqi & Abū Dāwud). This scholarly view is also supported by another Companion of the Prophet, ┌, namely, Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him!) who, when he was asked concerning the pregnant woman if she fears for her child, answered, "She breaks the fast and feeds a poor person every day for each day missed—the amount of one *mudd* (i.e. a dry measure) of wheat" (Reported by al-Bayhaqi). He also said, "The pregnant woman and the nursing mother break the fast and do not make *qadā'* (as a means of compensation)" (Reported by ad-Dāraqutni).