

**FREQUENTLY ASKED
QUESTIONS ON
RAMADAN**

DEVOTIONAL ACTS IN RAMADAN

1. what is the significance of Ramadan and how can I fully maximize this opportunity to intensify my devotion to Allah in this month?

Allah says in the Holy Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah verse 185:

“Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Quran, as a guide to mankind, and also clear (signs) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong).”

Ramadan is the month of the Holy Quran; therefore, you are encouraged to do the following:

1. Do more good deeds with the aim of strengthening your faith and receiving Allah’s blessings.
2. Increase your knowledge by reading and studying the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet (pbuh)
3. Reflecting on the values that the Holy Quran teaches us, particularly in akhlaq (moral character). Our deeds and actions as a person of faith have to reflect good moral character, as that which has been laid out in our Holy Book.

Intensifying our devotion to Allah in Ramadan is not limited to ritual prayers and the fast. More than that, we should reflect on every aspect of our lives and realize our devotion to Allah in all of our actions, words and intentions.

2. Why do I have to fast in Ramadan?

Firstly, Ramadan is a special season, which brings with it bounties and blessings from Allah the most compassionate. It has been selected by Allah to be a month for believers to train and control their desires, and to enhance their spirituality.

One act of worship which has been chosen by Allah for that purpose is fasting. By abstaining from eating, drinking and following one’s desires, a Muslim will be able to have control over him / herself. The ability to control oneself is critical in discharging our duty as the vicegerents of God on this earth.

Secondly, fasting inculcates in us the value of compassion towards others. Only when we feel hungry and thirsty can we truly empathise with the poor and needy, who may have very little food to consume in their lives. Feeling such will encourage us to assist and contribute to their well- being, and ensuring the social justice that Islam wants to be established among mankind.

3. I wish to perform terawih prayers. How is it done?

Performing terawih prayers during Ramadan is highly encouraged. It is the main form of worship in the nights of Ramadan and cannot be performed in other months.

The time to perform the terawih prayers is after performing the obligatory evening ('isya') prayers. It is encouraged (afdal) to do the prayers in a mosque congregation. Nonetheless, terawih can also be done individually.

The terawih prayers can be done in sets of 8 rakaat, 20 rakaat or 36 rakaat; each 2 rakaat with one salam. The way to perform the prayer is the same as any other sunat prayers (for example, sunat qabliyah (before) or ba'diyah (after) that is associated with the five obligatory prayers).

According to a hadith reported by Imam Al-Bukhari and Muslim, narrated by Abu Hurairah R.A': "The Holy Prophet pbuh encourages (Muslims) to perform good deeds during the nights of Ramadan; but he did not force it upon them. The Holy Prophet pbuh said: "Whoever worships during the nights of Ramadan in piety and sincerity for Allah S.W.T, Allah shall forgive his past sins."

4. How do I perform the witr prayers?

Witr, in Arabic, means 'odd numbers'. Witr prayers can be performed on any night, but it is highly encouraged in the month of Ramadan. It can be done either individually or in a congregation. The minimum is 1 rakaat and can be done in sets of 3 rakaat, 5 rakaat, 7 rakaat, 9 rakaat, and up to a maximum of 11 rakaat.

Imam Abu Daud and An-Nasa'I have reported a hadith narrated by Abu Ayyub: "The Holy Prophet pbuh said, "Witr prayers are true. Whoever wants to perform five rakaat, do it. Whoever wants to perform three rakaat, do three rakaat. And whoever wishes to do one rakaat, do so."

5. I wish to perform the witr with the congregation at the mosque. But, I also want to wake up at night to do more prayers. Can I do the witr prayers again, even though there cannot be two witr in one night, as mentioned in the hadith?

Witr prayers can range from 1 to 11 rakaat. It is done after terawih prayers in many mosques as a means of closing the prayer session for the night in Ramadan. Thus, if one has performed 3 rakaat of witr after terawih, and then wakes up at night to perform the tahajjud prayers, he/she can still perform the witr prayers, as an addition to the 3 rakaat he/she had done earlier. The way to do it is to pray only 2,4,6 or 8 rakaat with the niyyah "I am performing 2 rakaat of witr for Allah S.W.T". Thus, this would not contravene the Holy Prophet's pbuh hadith: "There is no two witr in one night."

6. I have heard an Ustaz mention the benefits of the prayers called tahajjud. What is this prayer? How can I perform it?

Tahajjud prayers are done after one has slept at night, and before subuh arrives. There is no limit to the number of rakaat (cycles), with a salam after every two rakaat.

Allah S.W.T commands in Surah Al-Isra verse 79: "And during a part of the night, pray tahajjud beyond what is incumbent on you."

7. What is iktikaf?

Iktikaf refers to a spiritual retreat – staying for a sort while, or longer, in a mosque with the niyyah to devote oneself fully to Allah S.W.T. Iktikaf is recommended (sunnat), especially during the last ten nights of Ramadan. Sayidatina Aisyah R.A narrated: “The Holy Prophet pbuh performed the iktikaf after 20 Ramadan. The Prophet practiced this until his demise.”

8. I have often heard that the Lailatul Qadar is special. Do I have to spend the night in worship? If so, how do I do it?

Allah says in Surah Al-Qadr verse 1-3:

“We have indeed revealed this (message) in the Night of Power: And do thee know what the night of power is? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.”

There are many scholarly opinions on the exact date of Lailatul Qadar. One opinion is that Lailatul Qadar falls on the odd nights after 20 Ramadan i.e: 21, 23, 27 or 29 Ramadan.

During these nights, it is best if we increase our devotion to Allah with, for example: prayers (solat), reading the Holy Quran, saying the selawat (peace and blessings) upon the Holy Prophet, remembering Allah (zikir) and asking for His forgiveness.

Imam Ahmad, Ibn Majah and At-Tarmidzi have reported a hadith, as narrated by Sayidatina Aisyah R.A that the Holy Prophet pbuh has taught her a prayer to be said during Lailatul Qadar that means: “O Allah! You are the most Forgiving, You love to forgive, please forgive us!”

THE ACT OF FASTING

9. Is there a niyyah for the pre-dawn meal (sahur) and for the breaking of the fast?

There is no niyyah for the pre-dawn meal nor for the breaking of the fast.

The only niyyah that is needed is for the act of fast itself.

Instead, it is recommended to read the supplication (doa) for eating and drinking, before one takes the pre-dawn meal and before one breaks fast. During the breaking of the fast, you can also read an additional prayer: “O Allah! For You I fasted, in You I believe, and upon Your bounty I have broken the fast.”

10. When should we state our intentions (niyyah) for the fast?

The niyyah can be stated between dusk (maghrib) and dawn (subuh) before the next day’s fast.

11. If I deliberately break my fast in Ramadan for no valid reason, how can I make up the fast?

If you break your fast without a valid reason, it is counted as a sin because you have contravened one of the pillars of Islam. This requires an immediate repentance to Allah S.W.T and a vow never to do it again. You also have to make up for the day of the fast. However, you have missed out on great rewards for that fast which you have deliberately missed and made up for – because making up for the missed day is in no way the same as having fasted in Ramadan itself.

Abu Hurairah R.A narrated that the Holy Prophet pbuh has said: “Whomever breaks his fast in Ramadan without any valid reason (rukhsah), and not because of an illness, he/she can never make up for the fast he has missed, even if he had fasted the rest of his days.”

12. Yesterday, I woke up a little late for the pre-dawn meal. While I was having the pre-dawn meal the DJ on the radio said it was now time for imsak. Has my fast been invalidated?

Fasting begins at dawn (fajar/subuh) and lasts until sunset (maghrib). The announcement of imsak serves as a reminder that fajar is approaching and that one should finish eating as soon as possible. This is to avoid being caught unaware with food in one’s mouth when the call to prayer for fajar is being made. If you were still eating during imsak but have stopped before fajar, your fast is still valid.

13. I will be travelling during the upcoming Ramadan. Should I fast?

In commanding the fast during Ramadan, Allah S.W.T has given special consideration to travelers (musafir) such that it is not obligatory upon them to fast when they are traveling, but they have to make up the days they had missed (qadha’) after Ramadan.

Allah says in the Quran, in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 184: “For a certain number of days; but whoever among you is sick or on a journey, then (he shall fast) a (like) number of other days...”

As a traveler frequently encounters difficulties, Allah S.W.T gives him/her an exemption from the obligations of fasting in Ramadan when he/she travels. (Also refer to Question 28)

WOMEN AND FASTING

14. If my menses (haidh) ends before fajar, and I do not have time to perform the purificatory bath (ghusl), can I still fast?

Yes, you can fast if your menses (haidh) or post-natal flow (nifas) ends before fajar but you have not performed the bath (ghusl) until after fajar. This is because when your menses (haidh) or post-natal flow (nifas) has ended, it is obligatory upon you to fast. It is similar to

the case of those who are still in the state of major ritual impurity (junub) when fajar arrives, whose fasts are still considered as valid.

The basis for this ruling is in the Holy Quran:

“Permitted to you, on the night of the fasts, is the approach to your wives. They are your garments and ye are their garments. Allah knoweth what ye used to do secretly among yourselves; but He turned to you and forgave you; so now associate with them, and seek what Allah Hath ordained for you, and eat and drink, until the white thread of dawn appear to you distinct from its black thread black; then complete your fast till the night appears; but do not associate with your wives while ye are in retreat in the mosques.” [Al-Baqarah : 187]

If Allah allows a husband and wife to have marital relations up till fajar, it then follows that it is allowed to perform the ghusl after fajar.

This is supported by a hadith as told by Sayidatina Aisyah R.A meaning, “The Holy Prophet pbuh was still in a state of junub, but continued to fast.”

What is implied is that the Holy Prophet pbuh had not performed the ghusl until after fajar.

15. What is the legal ruling on the fast for pregnant women?

A pregnant woman may fast if she is physically able to do so. If she is not able to fast, she is allowed to break her fast.

If she does not fast for fear of her own health and safety, she has to make up the days she had missed (qadha’) only.

However, if she does not fast for fear of her child’s health, she has to make up the days she had missed (qadha’) and pay fidyah for the days she had missed.

16. Can a woman use medication to delay her menses (haidh) during Ramadan?

It is a scholarly consensus that women in haidh are not obliged to fast but are required to make up (qadha’) those days they have not fasted. It is not wrong for a woman in haidh to break her fast.

According to a hadith narrated by Sayidatina Aisyah R.A: “We are commanded to make up (qadha’) our fast but we are not commanded to make up (qadha’) our prayers (because of haidh).” (Reported by Imam Al-Bukhari)

Therefore, it is better to follow the natural course as set by Allah S.W.T. Nonetheless, should a woman want to take such medicine so that her menses (haidh) do not occur during Ramadan, it is allowed – as long as the medication does not cause harm to her. An expert’s or a doctor’s advice should be sought before taking any such medicine.

ACTS THAT INVALIDATE THE FAST

17. What are the acts that invalidate one's fast?

Acts that invalidate one's fast are:

- Deliberately inserting something into an open orifice, body cavity or passageway, except instances where it is done out of necessity, for example, due to illnesses. (Also refer to Questions 23 and 24). Thus, eating, drinking and smoking invalidate one's fast. However, injections (for medical purposes) do not invalidate it.
- Deliberately causing oneself to vomit.
- Having an ejaculation that is caused deliberately and voluntarily (Also see Questions 19 and 20)
- Having sexual intercourse while fasting
- The appearance of menses (haidh), post-natal flow (nifas) or giving birth
- Going insane
- Being unconscious for the entire day
- Drowsiness that incapacitates one's thinking capacity
- Murtad, i.e renouncing Islam.

18. Does having a wet dream invalidate one's fast?

Being in the state of major ritual impurity (junub) as a result of having a dream does not invalidate one's fast, regardless whether it occurs before or after subuh, as it is involuntary. A person who is in the state of junub can continue fasting; he merely has to perform the ghusl. (Also refer to Question 20)

19. I had a wet dream during the day in Ramadan so I performed the *ghusl*. Does performing the *ghusl* invalidate my fast?

Having a wet dream and performing the ghusl does not invalidate one's fast. Even if water accidentally enters the ears or one accidentally swallows water (while performing the ablution or bathing), the fast is not invalidated as it is deemed to be accidental.

The Holy Prophet pbuh has said: "Truly, Allah forgives those who have made a mistake, who have forgotten or who were coerced into doing something." (Reported by At-Tabarani)

20. Some people say that gargling and flushing out one's nose affects one's fast. How true is this?

Gargling and flushing out one's nose while performing the ablution is sunat. When fasting, one cannot do so excessively. As long as one does not do so excessively, but water still enters his/her throat, the fast is considered to be valid. (Please refer to Question 19). Likewise, if dust from the road or even a fly enters his/her throat, it is forgiven for it is unintended. Nonetheless, if his/her throat, and if water does enter his/her throat, his/her fast is invalidated.

21. Can someone who is fasting swim or play water sports?

Swimming, and it is related activities, may cause water to enter the swimmer's nose or ears. If water enters his/her nose or ears during the activity, the fast is invalidated. Thus, as a precautionary measure, one is advised not to swim in the day (during the fast) to prevent his/her fast from being invalidated. (Please refer to Question 19)

22. What is the ruling on the use of the inhaler (for asthmatics) during the fast?

Inserting a foreign object or substance into the body can invalidate one's fast. However, inserting something like medicine, out of necessity, such as difficulties in breathing, is allowed. Therefore, the warranted use of an inhaler will not invalidate one's fast.

23. Does injecting 'insulin' invalidate my fast?

Insulin injections for diabetics will not invalidate your fast. This is because the injection is not done through an open orifice, does not cure hunger pains nor does it result in any sort of satiation in the patient.

24. I have heard that someone who is fasting cannot clear his/her ears or his/her nose, whether by means of a cotton bud or his/her fingers. This is because it would invalidate one's fast. Is this true?

Among the acts that can invalidate one's fast is the deliberate insertion of objects into any open orifice. Clearing one's ears or nose will not necessarily invalidate the fast. You are allowed to clear your nose or ears, as long as you do it with caution and moderation. For example, do not dig excessively. Nonetheless, if you still feel uncertain, it is best not to do it, but to wait for the night instead.

25. Can I donate blood when I am fasting?

Donating blood in moderate quantities is permissible and will not invalidate the fast. However, donating blood in excess to the detriment of your health, such that it affects your ability to fast, is highly discouraged, and may cause you to break your fast.

DISPENSATIONS IN FASTING

26. What is the legal ruling if I unintentionally eat or drink when fasting?

Eating or drinking unintentionally does not invalidate the fast. Someone who has done so has to continue to complete his/her fast.

Imam Al-Bukhari and Muslim reported a narration by Abu Hurairah R.A: That the Holy Prophet pbuh said. "Whomever eats or drinks out of forgetfulness during Ramadan has to continue that fast. Food and drink is a gift from Allah for him/her."

In another authentic hadith reported by Imam Ad-Daruqutni is the following addition: “It is considered to be a gift from Allah. It is Allah who gave him that drink. (So,) he need not make up for that fast.”

27. Can I not fast if I need to go to Johor Bahru to buy something?

A musafir is someone who is traveling away from home and family, feels isolated (i.e not a part of that community), does not have a domicile and may encounter difficulties in his journey. (Also refer to Question 13)

Allah says: “Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire for you difficult.” (Al-Baqarah 185)

Therefore, a musafir is exempted from the obligation to fast and needs only to make up the days he/she had missed after Ramadan.

However, this does not apply to all types of travel. The distance of a journey for which it is permissible to break one’s fast is the same as that which allows us to pray qasar (shortening prayers from 4 to 2 rakaat), that is at least 84 kilometres. A journey to Johor Bahru falls short of this – thus, it is not allowed for one to break one’s fast nor not to fast because of it.

28. What is the legal ruling on the fast for the elderly?

For an elderly person who finds it difficult to fast, it is encouraged for such a person to break his/her fast. This is the same for a sick person who has no hope that he/she will recover – he/she is also encouraged to break his/her fast.

To expiate the fast days, they have to pay the fidyah i.e. give food (or its monetary equivalent) to a poor person for each day they had not fasted. This is the leeway that Allah S.W.T has given us.

Ibn ‘Abbas R.A said: “Leeway is given to the elderly, but he/she has to give food to the poor and needy for each day he/she has missed and he/she need not make up for the day he/she had not fasted.” (Reported by Ad-Daruqutni, and verified by Hakim)

Allah says in the Holy Quran: “And those who are not able to do it (i.e. to fast) may effect a redemption by feeding a poor man; so whoever does good spontaneously it is better for him; and that you fast is better for you if you know.” (Al-Baqarah 184)

29. My wife is pregnant. After giving birth, might nurse our child. Should she fast? If not, what should she do?

A pregnant woman who fears for the life of her child if she fasts, is allowed to break her fast and is also allowed not to fast for the duration.

If she has sought the advice of an honest doctor, and is told that fasting will endanger the life of the child, she has to break her fast.

Allah says in the Holy Quran: “Do not slay your children.” (Al-An’am 151)

Allah also says: “And those who are not able to do it may effect a redemption (fidyah) by feeding a poor man...” (Al-Baqarah 184)

Many scholars recommend breaking the fast for pregnant women, and also for women who are nursing, if they are worried for their health if they fast. After Ramadan and giving birth, it is obligatory for the women to make up for the days they had not fasted.

If a woman is worried that she is endangering the life of her baby by fasting, she should break that fast. What is debated among scholars, however, is if she should merely make up (qadha’) for the days she had missed or pay fidyah, or both. In Ibn ‘Umar’s and Ibn ‘Abbas’ opinion, such women have to pay the fidyah. In light of the difficulties that such women face in making up for the days they have missed, what is required is the payment of the fidyah only.

30. What is the time to break one’s fast for those who are in the Northern/Southern Hemispheres, where daytime may last 24 hours? It is said that one can break one’s fast after 12 hours, but there is no evidence pointing to that.

It is true that nas (evidence) does not exist for the matter; it has become subject to scholarly opinion.

Sayid Sabiq explains that Muslims who live in such places have two choices:

- 1) Follow the times for breaking fast and imsak in Mecca or Medinah.
- 2) Follow the times of the nearest countries for example, Canada and the United States for the Northern Hemisphere, and New Zealand or Australia for the Southern Hemisphere.

Likewise, these choices apply to those fasting during the long summer days – where the sun sets at 9:45 pm (for example) and there is no twilight.

31. Consider this scenario: A person travels by plane from Johannesburg to Singapore in Ramadan. He/she leaves Johannesburg at 2:20 pm (time in Johannesburg) and arrives in Singapore at 6:45 am (Singapore time). If he/she has the pre-dawn meal (sahur) and breaks fast according to the times in the respective countries, he/she would have fasted for more than 20 hours. What should he/she actually do?

Allah S.W.T has given exemption to travelers (musafir). In this case, the person in question qualifies as a musafir (Also refer to Questions 13 and 28). For travelers, it is not obligatory for them to fulfill the fast in Ramadan for the days he/she is traveling. It is best that the travelers take this kindness (rukhsah) that Allah S.W.T has bestowed.

EXPIATION (QADHA') OF THE FAST

32. How does one expiate a fast that has not been fulfilled in Ramadan?

Expiation for the obligatory fast is divided into three categories:

1. Having the obligation to make up for the days missed (Wajib Qadha')
 - Those who were ill and whose illness would have been aggravated or caused harm to him/her had he/she fasted.
 - Those who did not fast because of traveling (more than 84 km)
 - Pregnant or nursing women who fears fasting will affect her health
 - Women who have menses (haidh) or post-natal flow (nifas)
 - Those who broke their fast because of extreme hunger or thirst such that the fast becomes an unbearable hardship.
 - Those whose fast has been invalidated by acts that invalidate one's fast.
2. Making up the days missed (Wajib Qadha') and paying fidyah
 - Pregnant or nursing women who fear fasting may be detrimental to the baby
 - Someone who had not made up for the previous year's fast when the following Ramadan had come around again
3. Having no obligation to make up for the days missed but is obliged to pay fidyah
 - Those who are unable to fast and who has an illness from which there is no hope of recovery
 - The elderly who is too weak to fast and is no longer capable of fasting

33. Can I make my intention to fast for the six days of voluntary fasting in Syawal concurrently with the make-up (qadha') fast?

No, you cannot. Imam As-Syafi'I (in his book Al-Umm) states his opinion in the chapter. "Every act is associated with its own intention" that: it is necessary to differentiate between the Ramadan fast, a fast to fulfill a nazr (vow), a fast as an expiation (kaffarah), a make-up fast (qadha') and a voluntary fast (sunnat).

Imam Jalaluddin As-Suyuti (in his book Al-Isybah) is also of the opinion that it is necessary to differentiate between Ramadan, vow, and voluntary fasts.

Nonetheless, someone who does his make-up fast in Syawal may also be given the rewards for the voluntary six days Syawal (without having to state his intention to do so), according to some scholars. (Also refer to Question 34)

34. Can we make our intentions for the make-up fast together with voluntary fasts, such as the voluntary fasts on Monday and Thursday, and also the voluntary Rejab fasts?

Some scholars disallow making intentions for voluntary (sunnat) and obligatory (wajib) acts together. Thus, it is better for us to differentiate between the two (Also refer to Question 34 above).

Therefore, in the matter of the make-up fast and the voluntary fast, it is obligatory to give precedence to the make-up fast, which is a debt to be paid, while the voluntary fast is not. If someone wants to make up his fast on Monday or Thursday or any day on which fasting is encouraged, he/she should just state his/her intention to make up that fast. InshaAllah, he/she would be given the rewards for a voluntary fast also, by the virtue of having fasted that day (even if he/she had not made a niyyah for that).

35. How do we calculate the amount of fidyah owed for all the days of the fast have not been fulfilled?

To calculate fidyah accurately, please go to the following website:
https://www.muis.gov.sg/eservices/fidyah_online.aspx

36. Can I pay fidyah in cash, rather than in kind?

Allah S.W.T says in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 184 “ And those who are not able to do it may effect a redemption by feeding the poor man; so whoever does good spontaneously it is better for him; and that you fast is better for you if you know.”

Fidyah means to give food to the poor. Food, here, refers to the staple food of the people in the country. In Singapore, the staple food is rice. Therefore, the Muslims in Singapore who do not fast have to pay fidyah at the rate of 1 mud of rice for each day they do not fast. 1 mud is equivalent to 750 grams.

However, it is up to the individual whether he/she wants to pay cash or in kind (i.e. rice). In Singapore, it might be more expedient for all concerned to pay cash. This is because by giving cash, the recipient can buy his/her food. Cash is more convenient; rice requires a lot of storage space, has a limited shelf-life, needs to be packaged and is subject to pests such as weevils, mice, etc.

Please note that the amount of fidyah to be paid increases for each year that the fast has not been made up for (qadha). (Please refer to question 35.)

37. Do I still have to make up for a fast (qadha’) I have missed even after I have paid fidyah?

The payment of fidyah does not remove your obligation to make up the days you have missed. You have to make up the days you did not fast, as long as you are physically able to do so. (Please refer to Question 33.)