

Ramadan Daily Quran Studies, compiled by Dr Zahid Aziz, 2026

Derived largely from the writings of Maulana Muhammad Ali

Produced by:

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Study 18: Fasting in Islam —

The month of Ramadan

- The Holy Quran says:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ ۚ
فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۗ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ
يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ ...

“The month of Ramadan is that in which the Quran was revealed,
a guidance to people and clear proofs of guidance and the Criterion.

So whoever of you is present in the month, they shall fast in it,
and whoever is sick or on a journey, (they shall fast) a (like) number of other days.

Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire hardship for you...”

—2:185

- This particular month has been chosen for fasting because it is the month in which the Quran was revealed. It is well-known that the Quran was revealed in portions *during a period of twenty-three years*; therefore, by its revelation in the month of Ramadan is meant that the revelation *first took place* in that month in a certain year.
- The first revelation came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ when he was 40 years old during one of the nights towards the end of the month of Ramadan when he was in the cave of Hira. As the Quran says:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ ﴿١﴾

“Surely We revealed it on the Night of Majesty.” —97:1

- According to reports in Hadith, this was a night in the last ten nights of Ramadan (Bukhari, hadith 2020). Of course, fasting in Ramadan for Muslims, as we practise it, was only prescribed several years later, after the migration to Madinah.
- The greatest spiritual experience of the Holy Prophet ﷺ had taken place in that month. So it was considered to be the most suitable month of the year for the spiritual discipline of the Muslim community through fasting.

- If a particular time had not been specified, and it had been left up to the individual to decide which days in the year to fast, the discipline of fasting would have lost most of its value and would not have been a community institution.
- Because of choosing a fixed month, when that month begins the whole Muslim world, from one end of the earth to the other, has the same experience.
- All sections of Muslim society suddenly change the course of their lives when Ramadan begins.

- People who are exempted from fasting are specially mentioned either in the Holy Quran or in the Hadith. The Quran has mentioned the sick and those on journey in the above verse, 185. They are also mentioned in the verse before it as follows:

...فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ^ط

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ...

“... But whoever among you is sick or on a journey,
(they shall fast) a (like) number of other days.

And those who find it extremely hard may effect redemption
by feeding a poor one. ...” —2:184

- The sick person and the traveller who miss any fasts in Ramadan are required to fast afterwards, when the sickness has gone or when the journey ends, and to complete the missed fasts after Ramadan.
- Those who have a long-term illness are allowed to effect a redemption by feeding one poor person for every fast missed.
- According to Hadith, old people, pregnant women, and women suckling a child, are exempt from fasting and should feed a poor person instead (Bukhari, heading to hadith 4505).

- Those who cannot afford to feed a poor person can perform some other act of charity, such as helping someone in need in some other way.
- People engaged in hard manual labour may postpone fasting to a time of the year when it is possible for them to fast.
- The sick person and the traveller have the option of keeping the fast if they do not find it hard to do so, since if the fasts are not kept the number of days must be completed afterwards when the sickness or the journey is over.

- The permissive nature of the words of the Quran is reflected in many of the most reliable Hadith reports. In one report it is stated that on a certain journey on a very hot day, only the Prophet ﷺ and one other man kept the fast. It says:
 - “We set out with the Prophet ﷺ on one of his journeys on a day so hot that a man would put his hand over his head due to the extreme heat, and no one among us was fasting except the Prophet ﷺ and Ibn Rawāhah” (Bukhari, hadith 1945).

- When people travelled with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, those who kept the fast did not find fault with those who broke it, nor did those who broke the fast find fault with those who kept it.
- A person who has to make up for fasts missed during Ramadan can do so when they like before the next Ramadan. These fasts do **not** have to be kept on successive days in a row. There can be gaps between them (Bukhari, heading to hadith 1950).
- The Holy Quran does not mention the application of any punishment for deliberately breaking the fast while fasting.

- Hadith only shows that it is sufficient that the violator should be sincerely repentant. There is a rather touching story about this in Hadith as follows.
- A man came and confessed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he had broken his fast while fasting. The Holy Prophet asked him to perform a certain act of charity as penance. He replied that he was unable to do it.
- The Holy Prophet asked him about another act and he gave the same reply. The Holy Prophet then asked: “Can you afford to feed sixty needy poor people?” He said: “No.”

- Then it so happened that someone brought a bag of dates for the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The Holy Prophet said to the man:

“Take this and give it in charity.”

The man replied:

“Should I give it to someone poorer than me? There is no one poorer in Madinah than my family!”

- Hearing his reply, the Holy Prophet laughed out loud and then said: “Feed your family with it.” (Bukhari, hadith 1936)

- Maulana Muhammad Ali comments on this incident as follows:

“What great mercy is there in the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ !

No doubt, his teachings impose hardships and difficulties by requiring prayer and fasting. Moreover, for infringing a rule of fasting a penalty has to be imposed. However, if a person acknowledges that they have disobeyed some commandment of Allāh, and is sincerely repentant, this incident shows how great the sympathy and mercy is with which they are treated. This clearly shows that the real purpose was to instil the spirit to abide by the Divine commandments, and it was not to impose difficulty and hardship.”

END OF STUDY 18