



Can we just recap about *Sawm Ramadhān*?

Sawm Ramadhān involves:

- abstaining from food and drink;
- abstaining from sexual intercourse;
- doing so only between the period of dawn and sunset;
- doing so only during the days of Ramadhān;
- doing so only with the *niyyah* (intention) of pleasing Allāh.



Tell me about *niyyah*?

There must be a clear *niyyah* to perform *siyām* the next day, which must be present before Fajr.

Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has said, "He who does not resolve to fast before it is Fajr, then there is no fast for him."

Abu Dāwūd¹

The intention need only be knowledge in the heart about what you are doing and does not require specific words either be spoken on the lips or formulated in the mind.



What if a person didn't know that Ramadhān had started? Maybe they found out during the day?

Now that they know it's Ramadhān, they should immediately stop eating and drinking. However, the rest of the day won't be counted as a fast, as confirmed by the Abu Dāwūd hadīth above. According to the majority of scholars, they must make up that day later on. To cite Imam Hajjāwī, '*If the obligation to fast is made apparent in the middle of the day, all who are obliged to fast should begin to do so and then make up the fast on another day.*'²



Are there any times around Ramadhān when we cannot perform *siyām*?

We are not allowed to perform *siyām* in Ramadhān nights. This is *harām* (forbidden). Any *siyām*, whenever it is, can only take place, between dawn and sunset. Neither can we perform *siyām* if we are uncertain as to whether Ramadhān has even started. For example, on the 30th of Shabān, the month before Ramadhān, if you don't sight the moon, you cannot fast. This day is known as the 'day of doubt.' You must continue with the full 30 days of Shabān and start the fast the next day which will be considered 1st Ramadhān.

¹ This relates to *Sawm Ramadhān* only. Intention for *nafl siyām* (voluntary fasting outside of Ramadhān) can be made anytime up to Dhuhr.

² He continues, 'It also applies to women who are just now free from menses or post-natal bleeding and the traveller who returns to his city when he is not fasting.' This quote is from Hajjāwī's book *Zād al-Mustaqni'* and expresses the Hanbali view, shared also by Abu Hanīfah. However, there is a difference of opinion here. The majority view, maintained also by Mālik and Shāfa'i, is that the non-fasting traveller returning home or the woman who became pure during the day, may continue to eat and drink. Supported by Sheikh Uthaymīn in *Fatāwa al-Siyām* (See Islam.qa 49008).

Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has said, on the authority of Abu Hurairah, رضي الله عنه, "Observe fast on sighting it (the new moon) and break it on sighting it. But if (due to clouds) the actual position of the month is concealed from you, you should then count thirty (days)." Muslim

We are also not permitted to perform *siyām* on Eid. This too is *harām*.

Narrates Abu `Ubaid رضي الله عنه (the slave of Ibn Azhar), I witnessed the 'Id with 'Umar bin Al-Khattāb who said, "Allāh's Apostle صلى الله عليه وسلم has forbidden people to fast on the day on which you break fasting (the fasts of Ramadhān) and the day on which you eat the meat of your sacrifices (the first day of 'Id ul Fitr and 'Id ul-Adha)"

Bukhari



On a Ramadhān day, when do we commence our *siyām*?

Allāh says:

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ

and eat and drink until the white thread of dawn appear to you distinct from its black thread;

Sūrah Baqarah, 2:187

We start our fast at *Fajr as-sādiq* (the true dawn), the time when the whiteness of the dawn can be distinguished from the darkness of the night. Basically, this is the time of the Fajr call to prayer. (assuming we have a reliable *muedhdhin* [caller to prayer]).

One of the companions of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم at the time of the above revelation, believed that the reference made was to actual pieces of thread. He would keep white and black threads with him and only commence fasting when he could distinguish between the two. According to one hadith,

"Allāh then revealed the words, 'of dawn', and it became clear that that meant night and day."

Bukhāri, narrated by Sahl bin Sa`d رضي الله عنه



Why do you use the words *Fajrus sādiq* above?

Sādiq means true and is the opposite *khādib*, false. Describing this time of *Fajr as-sādiq*, distinguishes it from *Fajr al-khādib* (the false dawn). *Fajr as-sādiq* is said to be characterised by a horizontal spreading of light, reddish in colour, which can be seen from hilltops and which sends its light throughout roads and houses.



My cousin says we should actually wake before Fajr and have a meal when fasting.

That's great! What he says is correct. The meal he is talking about is called *suhūr*. Now, if you don't manage to have it, your *siyām* is still valid. However, *suhūr* is a strongly recommended and highly blessed action.


Anas رضي الله عنه narrates that Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Take *Suhūr* as there is blessing in it."

Bukhari, Muslim



My cousin also says we should stop eating 15 minutes before Fajr, just to be on the safe side.

Oops! That's not so great! Here, I have to say, he is not correct. This practice is known as *imsāk*. It is a *bid'ah* (an innovation into religion) and therefore a grave sin. You should eat and drink up to Fajr. In fact, you might see some Ramadhān calendars with an *imsāk* time before Fajr. The Scholar Sheikh Uthaymīn said 'This is a kind of *bid'ah* which has no basis in the *Sunnah*.³ Rather the *Sunnah* is to do the opposite, because Allāh says in His Holy Book.... (and then he quoted the above verse)'

 **What is so good about *suhūr*?
Why not just eat well before going to sleep?**

1. *Suhūr* is a *sunnah* and therefore something that we should strive to follow and not abandon;
2. *Suhūr* gives us that extra bit of essential nourishment that can help us through the day;
3. If *siyām* is made easy by *suhūr*, then it enthruses us towards our *siyām* generally;
4. *Suhūr* gets us up and ready for our Fajr prayer;
5. *Suhūr* brings the family together at a blessed time;
6. *Suhūr* is a means of contradicting the innovated practices of the Jews and the Christians,



Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "The main difference between our (Muslims) fasting and the fasting of the people of the scripture (Jews and Christians) is *suhūr*."

Muslim, as narrated by `Amr Ibn al-`Aas رضي الله عنه

7. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used the words '*do not*' with regard to missing *suhūr*. He said,

'*suhūr* is a meal full of blessings, so do not give it up even if you (just) drink some water for verily, Allāh and His angels seek forgiveness for those who take *suhūr*.'

Narrated by Abu Sa`īd al Khudrī رضي الله عنه in Ahmad

8. And last but by no means least, it is a source of *Rahmah* (Mercy) from Allāh and results in the angels asking Him for our forgiveness. Note the above hadīth again.

 **What should I eat at *suhūr*?**

You can eat anything you like. So long as it is *halāl* (permitted), there is no restriction upon you. If you are late, then even a gulp of water will suffice as the blessed action of *suhūr* (see the above hadīth). The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم spoke highly of eating dates. He said, '*How excellent are dates as the believers' suhūr.*' (Abu Dāwūd)

 **Can I brush my teeth in the morning while I am performing *siyām*?**

³ A practice of the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم

Yes, you can, but be careful not to swallow any toothpaste or water. While doing *siyām* you can also:⁴

- Use *siwāk* (tooth stick);
- Take a bath, for example to cool yourself;
- Use *khul* (Arabic eye liner);
- Have an injection (so long as it is non-nourishing);
- Taste food on the tongue – e.g. when cooking during the day to test for salt;
- Give blood for medical diagnosis;
- Breathe in water vapours – applying, for example, to some factory workers;



What breaks the fast?

LIST A: Nullifications. These actions break the fast:

1. Eating and drinking deliberately;
2. Vomiting intentionally;
3. With regard to women, menstruation (the monthly period) – (*hayd*);
4. With regard to women, bleeding after childbirth – (*nifās*);
5. With regard to men, the intentional release of semen while awake;
6. Having the intention to break the fast;
7. Injections providing nourishment;
8. Sexual relations.

There are other more doubtful matters as well, but those are beyond the scope of this writing.



What if somebody did these things accidentally, for example, because they forgot?

LIST B: Conditions for nullification

For the above eight reasons to happen, three factors must apply with regard to the fasting person:

- I. They must know that this thing nullifies the fast;
- II. They must be sane, mentally fit and aware of what they are doing;
- III. They must have free will to nullify their fast i.e. he or she has not been forced.



OK, so let's assume you have done one of the things in LIST A, and that you are all of the things mentioned in LIST B, what happens?

With regard to numbers 1 – 7 in LIST A, the person must perform *qada*. This means that he or she must make up that day after Ramadhān. With number 8, there is an additional penalty which is called *kaffārah* and is much more severe.

LIST C: With *kaffārah* He must:

- a) Free a slave, or if he can't do that
- b) Fast for sixty consecutive days outside Ramadhān, or if he can't do that

⁴ This list is a summary only from authentic narrations. For more specific information about things that do or do not affect the *siyām*, you can refer to the works of reliable scholars.

c) Feed sixty poor people.⁵



Yes, that is severe. So, why only a one-day qada for the other fast breaking actions?

Allāh alone knows best why the punishment method is the way it is. However, don't make the mistake of thinking that 1-7 in LIST A are not sins. With the exception of *hayd* and *nifās*, all the items on this list are amongst the *kabā'ir*. They can bring forth serious punishment by Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, either on earth or in the Hereafter.

Siyām in Ramadhān is an obligatory action commanded by Allāh. You are a very miserable person if you decide to intentionally eat or do other things to break a fast in *Ramadhān*. As well as the *qada siyām*, you should immediately ask Allāh's forgiveness for this serious sin, and never repeat it.



Tell me more about number 1 in LIST A above. You say that if you genuinely forget, your *siyām* is not broken and you may continue. What if you've eaten a whole meal?

It would take a very reckless and forgetful a person to do such a thing. However, it's possible. If they genuinely forgot, but then realised their mistake, he or she can continue fasting.



Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "If one of you eats and drinks out of forgetfulness, then let him complete his fast, for it was indeed Allāh who gave him food and drink. Bukhari and Muslim

Again, this only applies if a person 'genuinely' forgets.



Tell me about number 2 in LIST A above, vomiting intentionally?

This applies only to a person who does so *intentionally*. For example, by deliberately smelling something nasty or by sticking his fingers in his mouth. It does not apply to those who vomit by accident, without intention.



Tell me about numbers 3 and 4 above, *hayd* and *nifās*? This happens innocently.

Yes, it is entirely innocent. It occurs naturally and beyond a person's control. However, it still breaks the fast. Even if it happened two minutes before sunset, that day would still have to be made up after Ramadhān.



Tell me more about number 5 in LIST A. Also, why do you use the words 'while awake'?⁶

⁵ Based upon the following hadith. Abu Hurairah narrates that a man came to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and said, 'I had sexual intercourse with my wife on Ramadhān (while fasting)'. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked him, 'Can you afford to manumit a slave?' He replied in the negative. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked him, 'Can you fast for two successive months?' He replied in the negative. He صلى الله عليه وسلم asked him, "Can you afford to feed sixty poor persons?" He replied in the negative. (Abu Huraira added): Then a basket full of dates was brought to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and he said (to that man), "Feed (poor people) with this by way of atonement." He said, "(Should I feed it) to poorer people than we? There is no poorer house than ours between its (Medina's) mountains." The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Then feed your family with it." Sahih Bukhari

⁶ This ruling only applies to semen. It does not apply to *madhī* (prostatic fluid) and *wadhī* (sticky substance released after urinating without any sense of pleasure).

It is a good question and we should never feel embarrassed about discussing these things, if they can affect our worship of Allāh.

- This nullification only applies if it is bought on by kissing or hugging a women or by the man drawing it out himself.
 - In such circumstances, his fast is broken and he should make up the day after Ramadhān.
- If the semen is released by merely looking or thinking about something that he should not be thinking of, then he should repent to Allāh, but he may continue fasting.
 - Some ulema say he should also make up another day after Ramadhān.
- If the semen is released while he is asleep, then his fast is not broken.



So, does that mean a man cannot hug or kiss his wife, while fasting?

If he can control himself, he can. But if he can't and he fears semen will be drawn, he must not. The general rule while fasting is to avoid doing, seeing or thinking about anything that may cause you to break your *siyām*.



Tell me about number 6 above? What if a person intends to break his *siyām*, but then changes his or her mind?

If a person deliberately intends to break his *siyām*, then it is broken from that point onwards, regardless as to whether they changed their mind.



What if he can't find any food?

It is irrelevant that he didn't eat anything or even, couldn't find any food. He has still broken his fast by his deliberate intention to break it.



Is that fair?

Yes, it is fair. Remember, in Islām everything is based upon intention. *Niyyah* is one of the *arkān as siyām*, a pillar of fasting. If he changes his *niyyah*, his *siyām* is broken, regardless of whether he then manages to get hold of some food or not.



Making up a day or days outside Ramadhān, should this be done immediately after Ramadhān?

No. They can be done at anytime in the following year, and before the next *Ramadhān*. You must perform a *qada* for each day that you missed. Those days do not need to be consecutive, that is, one after the other. They can be done together or spread over the year. However, they **MUST** be done. They carry the status of a *fard siyām* (an obligatory fast) and it is a great sin not to perform them.⁷

Here is a graphical summary of this chapter's main points. We will continue with the rules around Ramadhān in the next one Insha'Allah.

⁷ The *fard* status of these *qada* days is so strong that many scholars say they should be completed before doing any voluntary fasts that a person may wish to perform during the year.

LIST A: Nullifications

These actions break the fast:

1. Eating and drinking deliberately;
2. Vomiting intentionally;
3. With regard to women, menstruation (the monthly period) – (*hayd*);
4. With regard to women, bleeding after childbirth – (*nifās*);
5. With regard to men, the intentional release of semen while awake;
6. Having the intention to break the fast;
7. Injections providing
8. Sexual relations

plus



LIST B:

Conditions for nullification

For those eight actions to nullify the fast, three factors must apply with regard to the fasting person:

- I. They must know that this thing nullifies the fast;
- II. They must be sane, mentally fit and aware of what they are doing;
- III. They must have free will to nullify their fast i.e. he or she has not been forced.

means



The fast is nullified



Penalty for 1 to 7:

Qada:

Making up that day after Ramadhān.



LIST C. Penalty for 8: Kaffārah:

He must make up that day outside Ramadhān and:

- a) Free a slave, or if he can't do that
- b) Fast for sixty consecutive days outside Ramadhān, or if he can't do that
- c) Feed sixty poor people.

Fasting in Ramadhān (Sawm Ramadhān) (part b)

Questions

1. Tell me about *niyyah*.
2. What about the position of intention, say, where you did not know Ramadhān had started and only learned halfway through the day?
3. Are there any times around Ramadhān when we cannot perform *siyām*?
4. On a Ramadhān day, when do we commence our fasting?
5. What do the words '*Fajr as-sādiq*' and '*Fajr al-khātib*' mean?
6. Is it acceptable to stop eating, say, ten minutes before *fajr as-sādiq*, just to be on the safe side? If no, why not?
7. What are the merits of taking the meal of *suhūr*?
8. What breaks the fast?
9. What if somebody did the above things accidentally, for example because they forgot they were fasting?
10. What is '*qada*'?
11. With regards to *qada*, should the *qada* be done immediately after Ramadhān?
12. What if you missed two or more *siyām* in Ramadhān? Does one *qada* cover all?

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