

Which people are not required to fast in Ramadhān?

LIST D: Those not required to fast: We can divide them into 3 groups, made up of those who:

1. are completely exempted, with no penalty required of them;
2. are exempted but must make up the day after Ramadhān (do *qada*);
3. can fast but have the choice not to, without having to do *qada*. Instead, they must give a certain amount of food or money to the poor (*fidya*) for every day they miss.

I suppose, just like *salāh*, group (1) includes the young and the insane?

Yes, LIST E: Covered in this famous hadith:

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "The Pen has been lifted from three: from the child until he reaches puberty, from the sleeper until he wakes up, and from the one who has lost his mind until he recovers."

Abu Dawood

The young and insane are not *mukallaf* (accountable), and so fasting is not obligatory upon them.

So, who is included in group LIST D (2)?

LIST F: Exempted from fasting but they must do *qada*:

- i. A person on a journey;
- ii. A sick person;
- iii. A woman experiencing *hayd* and *nifās*;

With regard to LIST F (i), Allāh says,

فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۖ وَمَنْ كَانَ
مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ
يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ ۗ

So, everyone of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting but if anyone is ill or on a journey the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later. Allāh intends every facility for you He does not want to put you to difficulties.

Sūrah al Baqarah, 2:185



Although, Allāh loves that we take advantage of the allowances that he gives us, a travelling person still has the choice to fast or not. The following ahadīth demonstrate this:

Aisha رضي الله عنها narrates that Hamza bin 'Amr Al-Aslami asked the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, "Should I fast while travelling?" The Prophet replied, "You may fast if you wish, and you may not fast if you wish."

Bukhāri

Anas Ibn Malik رضي الله عنه narrates, "We used to travel with the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and neither did the fasting persons criticise those who were not fasting, nor did those who were not fasting criticise the fasting ones."

Bukhāri

Abdullah Ibn Omar رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Verily Allāh loves that His concessions are utilised as much as He hates the violation of His prohibitions."

Ahmad, Ibn Hibbān

However, if a person is very distressed by *siyām* on his journey, it is preferred for him not to do it.

Jābir Ibn Abdullāh رضي الله عنه narrates that Allāh's Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم was on a journey and saw a crowd of people, and a man was being shaded (by them). He asked, "What is the matter?" They said, "He (the man) is fasting." The Prophet said, "It is not righteousness that you fast on a journey."

Bukhari

With regard to LIST F (ii), this is again covered by the above *ayāh*. It does not include minor ailments like headaches and coughs. But again, if the person is distressed by the illness, and *siyām* may make it worse, then *siyām* becomes *makrūh* (strongly disliked).

With regard to LIST F (iii), such women MUST NOT do *siyām*.



Who is included in group (3) in LIST D?

LIST G: Must give *fidya* if they decide to miss a fast:

- i. The elderly;
- ii. The chronically or terminally sick;
- iii. Pregnant or breast-feeding women who fear for themselves or their child

Allāh says about these people,

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مَسْكِينٍ ۖ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ ۚ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

For those who can do it (with hardship) there is a ransom (fidya), the feeding of one that is poor (miskeen). But he that will give more of his own free will it is better for him and it is better for you that ye fast if ye only knew.

Sūrah al Baqarah, 2:184

With regard to pregnant women, there is a difference of opinion amongst the *ulema* here. Such a person comes under either:

- category (2) in LIST D i.e. they must perform *qada* only for each day missed without *fidya* or
- categories (2) and (3) i.e. they must perform *qada* and offer *fidya* for the days missed or
- category (3) i.e. offer *fidya* only for the days missed without *qada*.

The difference primarily is based upon who is at risk. Ibn Abbas narrated on the above verse that, *‘this also applies to pregnant and nursing women, if they are afraid.’* Abu Dawood said: *“i.e., if they are afraid for their children, they may break the fast.”*

Abu Dawood; classed as saheeh by al-Albāni in al-Irwa’

To cite again Imam Hajjāwī’s discussion of the Hanbali stance, *‘If a pregnant woman or a nursing mother fears for her own safety, then she has to only make up for the fast that she missed. If she fears for the safety of her child, then she must make up for the fasts and feed the poor for each fast that she missed.’*

Before we move on, here is a graphical summary:

LIST D: Those not required to fast:

We can divide them into 3 groups, made up of those who:

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2. Are exempted but must make up the day after Ramadhān (do *qada*);

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LIST E: The young and the insane are not required to fast:

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “The Pen has been lifted from three: from the child until he reaches puberty, from the sleeper until he wakes up, and from the one who has lost his mind until he recovers.”
Abu Dā’ud

LIST F: Exempted from fasting but they must do *qada*:

- i. A person on a journey;
- ii. A sick person;
- iii. A woman experiencing *hayd* and *nifās*;

LIST G: Must give *fiḍya* if they decide to miss a fast:

- i. The elderly;
- ii. The chronically or terminally sick;
- iii. Pregnant or breast feeding women who fear for themselves or their child

Pregnant women: *There is difference of opinion amongst the ulema. They are either:*

- category (2) in LIST D i.e. they must perform *qada* only for each day missed without *fiḍya* or
- categories (2) and (3) i.e. they must perform *qada* and offer *fiḍya* for the days missed or
- category (3) i.e. offer *fiḍya* only for the days missed without *qada*.

When do we end our *siyām*?

We end our *siyām* at Magrib i.e. the time when the disc of the sun has completely set over the horizon. In the early days of Islām, some companions of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would stand on hills or sit on camels to confirm if this had taken place.

What is the meal at the end of the fast called?

Iftār. It is derived from the word *fātir* – to break or cleave. It is also similar to the Arabic the word, *futūr* which means ‘first meal of the day’ i.e. breakfast. In Ramadhān, *futūr*, the **first** meal of the day, happens at Magrib.


That’s funny. In English, the first meal of the day is ‘breakfast.’ This sounds like Break-fast?

LOL. True. It is an old word which indicates that after ‘fasting’ all night, it is now the time to ‘break’ that ‘fast.’

What should we eat for *iftār*?




It is *sunnah* to break the fast by eating dates and sipping water. Thereafter, anything *halāl*.

 **You advised us before have our *suhūr* close to Fajr. Should we take our *iftār* close to Maghrib?**

Yes. It is wrong to delay *iftār*. This habit is one of the factors that provide for the future protection of the *ummah*.

Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has said, "The *ummah* will remain on the right path as long as they hasten the breaking of the fast."

Narrated by Sahl ibn Saad رضي الله عنه in Bukhāri

 **I notice that in Ramadhān the mosques are full in the evenings? I thought people might use that time to relax, after a whole day of fasting.**

No, actually. The worship continues. *Salāt-al-Tarāwih* is a special *salāh* that happens only in Ramadhān. It takes place after Isha and consists of a certain number of *rak`ahs* performed in congregation. *Tarāwih* is also a demonstration of the importance of the Qur`ān in Ramadhān.

 **Why?**

Because throughout Ramadhān, the Qur`ān is recited in big portions in *Tarāwih*. After *Sūrah Fātiha*, in every *rak`ah* of *Tarāwih*, the *imām* recites sections from the Qur`ān, starting from *al-Baqarah* and continuing through the Book everyday.

 **How many *rak`ahs* does the *imām* perform in *Tarāwih*?**

There is a difference among the *ulema* as to how many *rak`ah* should be read. However, the stronger opinion, based upon authentic *ahadīth*, is eight *ra`kah*, broken up into two *rak`ah* units, followed by three *witr*.

According to Aisha رضي الله عنها Allāh's Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم did not increase upon eleven *rak`ahs* in Ramadhān, or outside it.

Bukhāri

After the death of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it was Umar رضي الله عنه who revived the practice of *Tarāwih* in congregation. He ordered that eleven *rak`ah* be prayed.


Sa'd Ibn Yazīd said, "Umar ibn al Khattāb ordered Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Tamīm ad-Dārī رضي الله عنهما to lead the people in eleven *rak`ahs* of prayer, and the reciter would recite *soorahs* containing hundreds of *ayāh* to the extent that we would have to support ourselves due to the length of the standing and we would not depart from it until the first signs of dawn."

Reported by Mālik by way of Muhammad Ibn Yūsuf

The *ulema* state that although it is not based upon the stronger *ahadīth*, there is nothing wrong with reading more than eight e.g. twenty as is commonly done. However, maintaining the stronger position of eight is preferable.

 **Are those eight *rak`ah* prayed directly after Isha?**

Yes, usually. However, they can be prayed later also, or even split with some *rak`ah* being read after Isha and the remaining being read in the last third of the night, just before Fajr. The night *salāh* is called *Qiyām al-Layl* (the night standing) and, as you can imagine, it is extremely blessed.

 **With all the Qur`ān to get through, does the *imām* whiz through Allāh's Book, praying *Tārawih* fast?**

If any imām does this, he is not conforming to the sound teachings of the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. The recitation of the Qur'ān and *salāh* itself must be calm and peaceful. This will allow for real sincerity among the worshippers and for greater accuracy in recitation. Often in Tarāwih and Qiyām al-Layl prayers, the *imām* will enhance the worship, by slightly lengthening the time in *ruku* and *sujūd*.



You say Tarāwih is done in congregation. Can women attend?

Yes, they can so long as they don their usual outdoor Islāmic attire, including of course the *hijāb*, and maintain a clear separation from the men.



Is Tarāwih compulsory?

No. The Tarāwih is a *nafl* (voluntary) *salāh*. It is important to know this. There is reward in performing it, because it involves standing in worship before Allāh, with often long *ruku* and *sujūd*, listening to recitation of His Book. However, it is not *fard*. If you miss Tarāwih, there is no sin upon you. The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم was careful not to give the impression that nighttime congregational *salāh* was *fard*.

Once in the middle of the night Allāh's Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم went out and prayed in the mosque and some men prayed with him. The next morning the people spoke about it and so more people gathered and prayed with him (in the second night). They circulated the news in the morning, and so, on the third night the number of people increased greatly. Allāh's Apostle صلى الله عليه وسلم came out and they prayed behind him. On the fourth night the mosque was overwhelmed by the people till it could not accommodate them. Allāh's Apostle came out only for the Fajr prayer and when he finished the prayer, he faced the people and recited "Tashahhud" (I testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allāh and that Muhammad is His Apostle), and then said, "Amma ba'du. Verily your presence (in the mosque at night) was not hidden from me, but I was afraid that this prayer (Prayer of TaHajjud - night prayer) might be made compulsory and you might not be able to carry it out."

Bukhari, narrated by Aisha رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا



How does Ramadhān begin and end? Do we simply look at the calendar?

Ramadhān starts only by the sighting of the new moon, by a reliable witness.

Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم said. "fast when it (the new moon) is seen and cease fasting when it is seen, and perform the rites of Hajj based around that, and if it is hidden by clouds then complete thirty days (of fasting), and if two witnesses testify, then fast and cease fasting.

Nasa'ee and Ahmad [Also similar narration by Ibn `Umar رضي الله عنه in Bukhari

As the above hadīth mentions, at the end of Ramadhān also, the new moon needs to be sighted. If the new moon of the month of Shawwāl is sighted, then Muslims must not fast the next day. The next day is called EID AL-FITR. It is a day of celebration.



Are there any rules or regulations surrounding Eid al-Fitr?

- The men must attend two *rak`ah* of Eid *salāh* in *jama`ah* (congregation)
- This happens in the morning, after sunrise.
- This *salāh* is *fard*.
- It is also *fard* to give a certain amount of *zakāh* to the poor.
- This is a special *zakāh*, separate from the *zakāh* spoken of earlier in this book.
- It is called Zakatu-al-Fitr.
- It must be given before the Eid *salāh*, preferably on the last day or so of Ramadhān.
- Apart from these factors, there are no significant hard and fast rules about Eid al Fitr.

- The word Eid means ‘celebration’
- Eid is a day of celebration and happiness.
- A day for family and friends to be together.
- It is a very, very special day for all Muslims.

That concludes our discussion of *Sawm Ramadhān*. Infact.....

أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ

That concludes Book 2 of Can I ask about Islām?

Fasting in Ramadhān (Sawm Ramadhān) (part c)

Questions

1. Which people are not required to fast in Ramadhān?
2. When do we break our fast?
3. What is the meal at the end of the fast called?
4. What should we eat for *iftār*?
5. Should we take our *iftār* close to magrib or wait a while before we eat?
6. What is Tarāwih?
7. What is the prayer known as deep in the night?
8. What is the first day of the month of Shawāl called?
9. When is the preferred time to give Zakat-al-Fitr?

Islam around the world



Tarāwih prayers at the Muhammad al-Amin Masjid, Muscat, Oman
