

Norms of Conduct related to the Fast

Having come to know the sanctity of this glorious month, the month of Ramadhan, which is Allah's favorite month in which He revealed the Holy Qur'an "a guidance to men and clear proofs of the guidance and the distinction," the month which He decreed that Muslims should fast during daytime and offer prayers during nighttime, and having come to know some of its merits, we ought to be familiar with the ethics related to fasting during this glorious month.

There are certain norms of conduct, preparations, and recommended deeds related to it which we must not take lightly so that Allah may accept our fast and prayers and forgive us; He indeed is the oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful. The following are the norms of conduct related to the month of Ramadhan and some highly recommended deeds (*a'mal*) to be performed during it:

- 1) Preparations in anticipation of welcoming the advent of the month of Ramadhan include repentance, cessation of doing anything prohibited, and the returning of trusts to their owners. One should not bear grudge against any other Muslim and should try hard to remove existing hostilities. He should abandon any sin he has been addicted to doing, or contemplating upon doing, and he should rely on Allah and make the intention to fast during the month of Ramadhan with sincerity, inwardly and outwardly.
- 2) He should exert himself with might and means to obey the Almighty, abstain from committing anything prohibited, abandon disputes and envy, avoid hurting people in any way, resort to silence except when praying to the Almighty, recite the Holy Qur'an and do every good deed he is able to do.
- 3) He should lower his gaze and not look at anything Allah has decreed he should not look at. He must avoid listening to vain talk or anything that may displease Allah, and avoid the places where things causing Allah's Wrath may be done, and not to move except in obedience to Allah.

Imam al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, as quoted on p. 351, Vol. 94, of *Bihar al-Anwar*, and also on p. 87, Vol. 4, of Kulayni's *Al-Kafi*, relying on the authority of Muhammad ibn Muslim al-Thaqafi, has said, "To fast is not just to abstain from eating and drinking. Rather, each of your senses has rights on you related to the fast. When you fast, you should let your hearing, vision, hair, skin, tongue, stomach and modesty fast with you, and you should safeguard yourself so that there is a distinction between the day you fast

and the day you do not."

4) On p. 351, Vol. 94, of *Bihar al-Anwar*, it is recorded that the greatest Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah (S) is our role model and leader. Once he (S) heard a woman cursing one of her neighbors, so he ordered some food to be brought, then he ordered her to eat it. She told him that she was fasting, so he asked her, "How can you fast and still curse your neighbor? Fast is not just abstention from eating and drinking."

He (S) is also quoted saying, "Anyone who fasts during the month of Ramadhan and protects his modesty and tongue and not hurt anyone, the Almighty will forgive his sins, the past and the future, and He will release him from the fire of hell and permit him to enter the eternal abode of bliss. He will accept his intercession as many times as the number of sands in the lands of the guilty ones living among the monotheists."

5) Imam al-Sadiq (as) quotes his ancestors who quote the Commander of the Faithful Ali ibn Abu Talib, peace be upon them all, regarding what things the Messenger of Allah (S) has prohibited, saying, "Anyone who backbites another Muslim will have voided his own fast and diminished his *wudu* (ablution), and he will come on the Day of Resurrection suffering from a smell more foul than that of a cadaver, offending others waiting for their reckoning. So, if he dies before repenting, he dies like one who considered everything Allah has prohibited as permissible."

6) Imam al-Sadiq (as) quotes his forefathers who in turn quote the Messenger of Allah (S) saying, "Anyone who starts his day fasting and is cursed and he responds by saying, 'I am fasting; peace be with you; I shall not curse you as you have cursed me,' the Almighty will then say, 'My servant has sought refuge with fast against the evil of one of My servants. Protect him, therefore, from My fire, and take him into My garden.'"

7) It is recommended that the fasting person should, if possible, spend half the daytime sleeping. The Prophet (S) is quoted saying that the sleep of a fasting person is an act of adoration and his breath praises the Almighty.

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