

Fasting and Matters Concerning Al-Qadaa, Al-Fidya and Al-Kaffaara

The fasting of Ramadan was a commandment set upon the Muslims in the second year after the Hijra (migration from Mecca to Medina) and was made obligatory for the healthy resident adult Muslim who possessed control of their mental state, provided that they were not (the female Muslim) in a state of menstruation or post natal bleeding. If one of these criteria was broken, the Muslim could choose not to fast or was Islamically not allowed to.

The Muslim who is not allowed to fast:

- A Muslim woman on her menstrual cycle
- A Muslim woman on her post natal bleeding period
- A Muslim who is in a state of illness such that fasting will cause greater harm to their health, or even lead to death. Included in this category are the terminally ill and the extremely old aged.

The one who has a choice to fast or not

- A traveller
- An ill person who will not worsen his or her condition by fasting
- The breastfeeding / pregnant woman who fears for either the health of her child, or her own[1]

The issue of Al-Qadaa (payback), Al-Fidya (ransom/substitution) and Al-Kaffaara (expiation) all come about through the breaking of a fast

of Ramadan or choosing not to fast at all. Different scenarios of breaking a fast/not fasting lead to different results, for it might be that the breaking of a fast leads only to 'Al-Qadaa (payback), or only Al-Fidya (ransom). It could be that not fasting lead to a combination of the two, or a combination of Al-Kaffaara (expiation) and Al-Qadaa (payback) – and we will try to mention all of these scenarios.

1. Al-Qadaa:

If a Muslim is present for the month of Ramadan and either misses the fast through a valid reason, or breaks their fast with no Islamic basis to do so, they must make up that day(s) after the month of is over[2]. This could be for the one who missed Ramadan through travelling, or the woman who missed fasts due to menstrual bleeding, the one who broke his fast by having intercourse with their spouse[3] or simply the one who intentionally ate during Ramadan without a reason to do so.[4]

There is only one case scenario whereby a Muslim is not obliged to make up days that they have missed in Ramadan, and that is for the terminally ill or the extremely old aged who will never have the ability to fast again. If this is the case, they must feed a poor person every day that they missed, and this known as the Fidya (ransom), the next topic of discussion.

2. Al-Fidya

The Fidya (ransom) is only to be paid in three cases:

1. If a pregnant or breastfeeding woman chooses not to fast, worried about the health of either the child she is feeding, or the baby in the womb, she can open her fast, but for every day that she does so, she needs to feed one poor person. [5]

She also will need to make Qadaa for the day that she has missed.[6]

2. As mentioned before, a terminally ill or old person is obliged to feed a poor person for each day of Ramadan that they miss, and due to their inability to fast afterwards, they will not need to make up that day afterwards

3. The person who missed some fasts in Ramadan and then allowed the entering of the next Ramadan (without a valid reason) before making up the fasts must now pay a Fidyah for each day that they had to make up.[7]

For example, if a Muslim travelled in Ramadan for ten days and did not fast, once the Ramadan is over, they are expected to make up those ten days as soon as possible. Many of the scholars even say that they cannot fast voluntarily before these days have been complete. If they do not fast those ten before the entering of the next Ramadan (provided they don't have a valid excuse), they must feed ten poor people. If however, they left themselves enough time in Shaabaan (the month before Ramadan) to catch up, and they then became ill, not allowing them to make up those ten days, they have a valid excuse, and they do not need pay a Fidyah for those days missed.

3. Al-Kaffaara

The Kaffaara (expiation) is to be paid in only one instance (according to the school of Imam Al-Shafi and Imam Ahmad) and this is when a Muslim has sexual intercourse (on purpose) during the daylight hours of Ramadan. According to the schools of Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Malik, also included in this is the one who breaks their fast intentionally, for example, by eating or drinking.

A Kaffaara is paid by either freeing a slave, or by fasting sixty consecutive days, or feeding sixty poor people.[8] The person still needs to make up the day of Ramadan that they broke, as the Kaffaara does not cover the Qadaa.

And Allah (Subhanahu wa ta'ala) knows best.

Footnotes:

[1] If she fears neither, she must fast like all other Muslims and not fasting for her is sinful

[2] Provided this is before the next Ramadan comes in. This is the opinion of the three schools of Fiqh, the Al-Malikiya, Al-Shaafiya and Al-Hanablia. The school of the Hanafiya do not condition the Qadaa being done before the coming of the next Ramadan.

[3] It is also obliged upon them to pay a Kafaara (expiation), but this Kafaara does not cover the day that they broke their fast, so it is still obligatory upon them to make up this day

[4] Other 'openers' of the fast include: not having the intention to fast before the dawn begins, self-induced vomiting, seminal discharge due to self-stimulation or kissing ones wife, intentional sexual intercourse, smoking or taking in a ventilator/inhaler, intravenous feeding, intentional gathering of spit in the mouth and then swallowing it and finally swallowing phlegm if it was brought up from the chest (phlegm brought up from the throat does not break the fast according to the school of Imam Al-Shafi)

[5] This is the dominant opinion in the school of Imam Al-Shafi and Imam Ahmad. The school of Hanafiya do not stipulate a ransom for either the breastfeeding or pregnant woman and upon her is only the Qadaa

[6] Some of the scholars differentiate between the pregnant and the breastfeeding woman. Imam Malik's school stipulate that for the pregnant woman that she does not need to pay a Fidyah for days

missed and that she only has to do the Qadaa. As for the breastfeeding woman, she needs to do both if she does not fast in Ramadan.

[7] The Hanafiya do not stipulate this condition and according to their school no Fidyah needs to be paid for one who delays his Qadaa until following Ramadans.

[8] Many scholars stipulate that these rulings are to be done in this order. Therefore, one must look to free a slave, and if they cannot find one, or do not have the means then they should fast sixty days and if they cannot do this then feeding sixty people becomes obligatory upon them.

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