

# Ramadan

*A Selection of Writings*

The Threshold Society

Know that, in the view of the verifiers, fasting has three degrees.

The common people fast by refraining from food, drink, and sexual intercourse from morning to sunset prayer.

The elect fast by preserving the seven bodily members from sins and acts of disobedience. They prevent the tongue from lying, obscenity and backbiting; the eye from looking with caprice and appetite; the ear from listening to nonsense, obscenity, idle talk and the like; and the hand, foot and other members from acts made unlawful by the Shariah. The divine revelation gives news of this meaning. *The hearing, the sight, the heart—all these shall be questioned* [17:36]. Mustafa—God bless him—said, “Five things break the fast—lying, backbiting, slander, ungodly oaths, and looking with appetite.”

The elect of the elect fast by examining their thoughts and preventing their innermost consciousness from paying attention to anything other than God. These are the people of poverty, and their capital and provisions for wayfaring on the path to God are nothingness. . . .

#### The Easy Roads of Sayf al-Din

When it comes to material food, if you eat too little, you will remain hungry like the crow and suffer ill-temper and anemia; if you eat your fill, your body will incur the penalty of indigestion.

Partake of God’s food, that easily digested nutriment, and ride like a ship on the spiritual ocean.

Be patient and persistent in fasting; be always expecting the Food of God.

For God, who acts with goodness and is long-suffering, bestows His gifts on those who are expectant.

The full-fed man doesn’t wait expectantly for bread, wondering whether his allowance will come soon or later;

but the foodless man is always asking, “Where is it?” and expecting it hungrily and seeking and searching for it.

Unless you are expectant, that bounty of manifold felicity will not come to you.

Rumi

As for the men of knowledge of the hereafter, what they mean by the correctness of fasting is its acceptability; and the acceptability of the fast is whether or not it has enabled one to reach one's objective. They understand the objective of fasting to be the taking on, as much as possible, of a character which contains one of the characteristics of Allah—the Self-Sustainer—and which resembles the angels in their having no desires.

Muhsin Fayd al-Kashani

Fasting leads to non-existence, for, after all, all joys are there. *God is with those who patiently persevere* [2:249].

Rumi

Know that the goal in fasting is for the veil of appetite and anger to be lifted from the heart's eye so that the heart may see the mystery of the dominion of heaven and earth.

The Easy Roads of Sayf al-Din

He who has fasted for Allah, the Glorious and Mighty, and is in the discomfort of heat and struck by thirst, will have his face wiped and be given the good news by a thousand angels whom Allah has entrusted to him until he breaks his fast; at that point Allah will say: "How sweet is your odor and your soul. Oh angels witness that I have forgiven him."

Imam Ja'far al Sadiq

I pass the night with my Lord: He giveth me food and drink. Hunger is God's food whereby He revives the bodies of the *siddiqs*, in hunger God's food reaches [them].

The Prophet [Peace and Blessings Upon Him]

The prophetic customs of fasting are also six—delaying the morning meal [until the last moment], hurrying to break the fast [at sunset] with a date or water before the ritual prayer, refraining from brushing the teeth after the sun passes the meridian, being generous by giving alms and food, reciting the Koran a great deal, and secluding oneself in the mosque, especially during the last ten days, during which is the Night of Power. Mustafa used to fold us his sleeping clothes during these ten days, and he and his family did not rest from worship, because of watching out for the Night of Power.

The Easy Roads of Sayf al-Din

There's hidden sweetness in the stomach's emptiness.  
We are lutes, no more, no less. If the soundbox  
is stuffed full of anything, no music.  
If the brain and the belly are burning clean  
with fasting, every moment a new song comes out  
of the fire.  
The fog clears, and new energy makes you  
run up the steps in front of you.  
Be emptier and cry like reed instruments cry.  
Emptier, write secrets with the reed pen.  
When you're full of food and drink, Satan sits  
where your spirit should, an ugly metal statue  
in place of the Kaaba. When you fast,  
good habits gather like friends who want to help.  
Fasting is Solomon's ring. Don't give it  
to some illusion and lose your power,  
but even if you have, if you've lost all will and control,  
they come back when you fast, like soldiers appearing  
out of the ground, pennants flying above them.  
A table descends to your tents,  
Jesus's table.  
Expect to see it, when you fast, this table  
spread with other food, better than the broth  
of cabbages.

Rumi

## The Virtues of Fasting

Fasting for the pleasure of God means increasing our sincere love of God. This is the essence of sacrifice: to give up, to put out of the present moment, something in itself good, to energize your love of God, your devotion and dedication.

Fasting develops conscience because we fast in secret as well as in public.

It teaches patience and unselfishness. In patiently enduring a deprivation, we become sensitized to the suffering of others and are therefore able to respond to their need.

It is a lesson in will-power and moderation.

It establishes “a transparent soul to transcend the limitations of life, a clear mind to think, and a light body to move and act.” It restores dignity and integrity by putting people in touch with their inner governing power, the source of inner peace.

## Requirements for a Fast Day

- The *niyyat*, or intention to fast, must be made, aloud or silently.
- The period of the fast must extend from the time just before sunrise (*fajr*) until just after sunset (*maghrib*).
- During the period of the fast, total abstinence from the following is required: food, drink (including water), smoking or consumption of tobacco, sexual intercourse, and any form of negativity—backbiting, fighting, cursing, arguing and similar behaviors.
- Semen may not be deliberately emitted, nor may one deliberately vomit.
- Pregnant or lactating women, the seriously ill, the aged, and the insane are exempted from fasting, but in some cases may be liable to make up missed days. A woman does not fast on days when she is menstruating, but must make up the missed days. When her period ends, she must resume fasting. Children under the age of twelve generally are excluded from the fast, but may fast part of the day or for some days.
- The fast is broken after sunset with [an odd number of dates] or a glass of water, followed by a modest meal.

Shaikh Hakim Moinuddin Chisti

Fasting is Mine and it I who give reward for it. [A man] gives up his sexual passion, his food and his drink for my sake. Fasting is like a shield, and he who fasts has two joys: a joy when he breaks his fast and a joy when he meets his Lord. The change in the breath of the mouth of him who fasts is better in Allah's estimation than the smell of musk.

Hadith Qudsi

The Virtues of Fasting

It teaches economy.

It teaches adaptability because our normal habits are turned upside down during Ramadan. We may learn a self-activated power in the face of unexpected hardships.

It teaches us discipline and order by connecting us to the observance of certain acts at a certain time.

It relaxes the digestive systems and insures against the many harms that develop from a weakened digestive system.

It encourages the spirit of social belonging, of brotherhood, and equality. We join ourselves to a world-wide community.

Kabir Helminski

For to fast is to do good unto  
your selves—if you but knew it.

Qur'an 2:184

It was the month of Ramadan in which the Qur'an was first bestowed from on High as a guidance unto man and a self-evident proof of that guidance, and as a standard by which to discern the true from the false. Hence, whoever of you lives to see this month shall fast throughout it; but he that is ill, or on a journey [shall fast instead for the same] number of other days. God wills that you shall have ease, and does not will you to suffer hardship; but [He desires] that you complete the number [of days required], and that you extol God for his having guided you aright, and that you render your thanks [unto Him].

Qur'an 2:185