

# Islam

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Islam is one of the most wide spread religions in the world. Its followers, called Muslims, number between 850 million and 1 billion. Islam is practiced on the African continent in the countries of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Somalia, and Mauritania. The Islamic religion is also practiced in Asia and in the area known as the Middle East in the countries of Omen, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and Israel. There are also Muslims in Russia, China, Europe, and North and South America. The three largest Muslim communities are found in Indonesia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

Islam is based on the belief in one god. Allah is the Arabic word Muslims use for “God”. In Arabic, “Islam” means submission to Allah. The Muslims believe that in the 7<sup>th</sup> century Allah chose Muhammad to receive his message. Muhammad recorded the revelations he received. That text has now become known as the Koran (also spelled Qur’an).

The most important rituals practiced by the Muslims are often referred to as the Five Pillars of Islam. They are as follows:

1. Salat - prayer that is offered five times daily.
2. Shahadah - a short statement declaring the greatness and oneness of Allah.
3. Sawm – the fast that takes place during Ramadan.
4. Zakat – a religious tax used for the poor, the sick, and others less privileged in the Islamic community.
5. Hajj – the pilgrimage to the Holy City of Mecca

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. This month lasts 29 or 30 days and occurs during different seasons depending on the cycle of the calendar. The fast of Ramadan lasts the entire month. All those who have reached the age of puberty (usually 12 years of age) are expected to observe the fast. Muslims are also expected to feed a poor person during this month. If one is ill or on a journey during Ramadan, one can fast the same number of days that were missed at a later time.

During this time, strict restraints are placed on Islamic followers. They are not to eat or drink during the daylight hours, but they may break the fast at sunset. The fast begins again the next morning when there is enough light to distinguish a black thread from a white thread. Smoking and sexual relations are also prohibited during this month. Ramadan is a time to demonstrate self-mastery of one’s physical desires.

Ramadan is also a time of Muslims to concentrate on the practice of their faith. Time is spent praying, worshipping, contemplating, and receiving religious instruction. Muslims give thanks for the gift of the Koran. Ramadan is a time of profound joy for many as they return to practicing their religion.

During Ramadan, there is a festival-type atmosphere after sunset. In many cities, Muslims go out after they have broken the fast to visit family and friends or to simply take a walk. Shopping areas and restaurants are open and busy and alive with conversation. On the 27<sup>th</sup> day of Ramadan, fireworks are often let off to celebrate the Night of Power – the night that Muhammad first received revelation of the Koran in 610.

Ramadan is a time to celebrate and give thanks for the gift of the Koran. It is a time to remember the poor, to practice self-mastery, and to recommit one’s self to the Islamic faith.

**FASTING (siyaam)** – to restrain from normal things, such as eating, drinking, and talking. Islamic fasting is total abstinence from any food particles passing through the mouth or nose, as well as drinks of any kind – along with abstinence from sexual association from the break of dawn until sunset.

**1. Merits of Fasting =**

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**12. What does fasting do for ones health?**

**13. How does fasting affect your social life?**

Now . . . You need to write a journal entry. It is the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of Ramadan. You need to write a friend who is NOT Muslim and tell him/her about your life these past 3 weeks. Needs to fill the rest of the page. Information needs to be accurate. 20 POINTS!!

## 1. Merits of Fasting

Islam is built on five pillars. Each represents a unique utility, an institution, if you will, through which the believer builds their relationship with the Creator and the creation. Of all the pillars of Islam, none is more special than siyaam, fasting. While there may be an appearance of Riya, eye service, or show, in all other pillars - Salaat, Zakaat, Hajj, and even the Kalimah - there is no such possibility in fasting. The only One who knows that you are really abstaining is Allah, the Almighty. It is easy to pretend to be fasting; while in hiding, you may eat or drink. Thus, fasting is considered a special worship, as Hadith reports from the Messenger of Allah (saas) have detailed.

It has been reported by the way of Abu Hurairah (raa) that the Prophet (saas) reported that Allah (SWT) said in a Hadith Al-Qudsi: "All services of the son of Adam are for them except fasting. It is for Me, and I will reward them for it. Fasting is a shield.

On the day you fast, do not use obscenity, nor yell at others, nor act ignorantly towards them. However, if anyone abuses you verbally or attempts to draw you to fight with him, say 'I am fasting' two times. The Prophet (saas) then states: I swore by the One (Allah) in Whose Hand is the soul of Muhammad, the breath of the faster is sweeter to Allah on the Day of Judgment than the scent of musk. The faster experiences enjoyment twice: They are pleased when they break their fast, and they are pleased when they meet their Maker" (Bukhari Muslim)

Among the points this incisive hadith revealed is that fasting is Allah's. Certainly, there is only one reason why a believer will put himself or herself through this trying physical exercise that - to seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT). The fast is the single most important device to test the Iman, (faith) of the believer and the depth of his or her sincerity and commitment to the concept of Tauheed, the Oneness of Allah.

The hadith also states that fasting is a shield, an armor protecting the believer from sinful acts (ma'asi). Do you not know that nourishment is the first culprit in the propagation of sins? For when you eat, the blood flow increases considerably, and the energy level increases, making it easier for Satan to use your own energy level to tempt you to commit sins. In another hadith, the Prophet states: "Satan runs in the circulatory system of the son of Adam in the same way blood circulates in our system; so tighten his passages with hunger." (Bukhari Muslim)

Now you see why fasting becomes a shield. Fasting enables the believer to guard against their archenemy. It also helps them against human evil by putting the patience and perseverance gained from fasting into use with forbearance and forgiveness of the attacker - that is, of course, when the safety of ones life is not involved. Otherwise, in this case, Al-Qur'an allows the believer to repel evil without transgression.

## FASTING (SIYAAM)

Fasting, or siyaam, has two meanings. Generally, siyaam or sawm, is derived from the root sama, to restrain from normal things, such as eating, drinking, and talking. If an individual refrains from these things, he is considered saaim, the observer of fast. Al-Qur'an uses the word generally when it revealed the conversation between the angel and Mary, the mother of Jesus, as the angel instructed her: "...And if you do see any one, say, 'I have vowed to remain silent for Allah.'" (Al-Qur'an 19:26)

The phrase "to remain silent" is the interpretation of the Arabic word, "sawm." The reason for this interpretation is that "sawm" cannot mean fast, i.e. restraint from food, because Mary had just been told to eat from the palm tree. This general meaning is common in the Arabic language.

In the Shari'ah, Islamic law, the word "sawm" means and implies a specific act, that is, "to worship Allah, abstaining, with intention to please God from fast breakers. These acts include physical nourishment, food, drink, and sexual intercourse or a lustful discharge of semen from the period between the break of dawn until sundown.

As this definition implies, the Islamic fasting is total abstinence from any food particles passing through the mouth or nose, as well as drinks of any kind - water, milk, juices, etc. - along with abstinence from sexual association during the day that commences from the break of dawn till sunset.

Although the definition indicates restraining the stomach and private parts, the tongue, eyes, ears and other limbs are equally obligated to be restrained if the faster wants to gain the total rewards of fasting. This is why Abu Hurairah has reported the Messenger of Allah (saas) as saying in a hadith:

"They who do not desist from obscene language and acting obscenely (during the period of fasting), Allah has no need that they did not eat or drink." (Bukhari Muslim)

## 2. Bad Breath

The above Hadith also gives the faster good news regarding the changing breath of the faster, which is sweeter to Allah (SWT) than musk. The changing breath of the mouth is a vivid physical testimony of this discipline. As much as we hate bad breath, in fasting it is a good thing, for it is caused by the coating which appears on the upper surface of the tongue soon after the commencement of the fast. After desiring food, the body begins to digest such waste material and deposits of fat as are available to it. This coating on the tongue is an outward proof that inner elimination is in progress. As soon as the digestive organs have been purified, the mouth returns to normal.

In a hadith related by Abdullah Bin Omar, the Prophet said: "Fasting (Siyaam) and the Book of Allah (Al-Qur'an) will intercede for the servant on the Day of Judgment. The fasting will say: 'O, Allah, I denied him nourishment and sex during the daytime. Let

me intercede on his behalf', and Al-Qur'an will say: 'I denied him sleep during night time; so let me intercede on his behalf.' So Allah will allow them to intercede on his behalf." (Ahmed)

This hadith indicates on the Day of Judgment, when the events will be overwhelming and the outcome uncertain, the fast and the Book will intercede for the servants of Allah. As every second of daytime devotion and every letter of Al-Qur'an voices their pleasure openly with you during the witnessing and interviewing, bear in mind that *Shafa'ah* (intercession), is an extreme privilege and a rare commodity. Even the average prophet will not attempt to intercede for anyone on this day.

Shal bin Sa'ad reported the Messenger of Allah (saas) said: "Paradise (*Jannah*) has a door called *Rayyan* (the quencher), which is preserved for those who observed fasting on the Day of Judgment. It will be announced, 'Where are those who observed fasting?' The door, *Rayyan*, will not be closed until the last one of them enters." (Bukhari and Muslim)

This is what the pleasure of Allah is all about. The person who observes fasting becomes an elite in the hour that every other person is busy turning the pages of their books of deeds. This is the time you are pulled away through the *Rayyan* Gate to Paradise.

Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudree related the Messenger of Allah (saas) said: "If a servant of Allah fasts a day for the pleasure of Allah (SWT), He will distance his face from the hellfire, in the equivalent of that day, which, in the sight of Allah, will take seventy years to cover." (Bukhari/Muslim)

The Hereafter is real, and rewarding evil in kind is also real; but as a reward to those who observe the fast, Allah (SWT) will distance them from the ultimate punishment. These four reports underscore the spiritual as well as the physical value of Siyaam, fasting.

### **3. What is Ramadan?**

Ramadan is derived from the Arabic root word ramida or arramad intense scorching heat and dryness, especially the ground. From the same root there is ramdaa, sunbaked sand, and the famous proverb: "Kal Mustajeer minar Ramadaa binnar" - to jump out of the frying pan into the fire. And in a hadith the Messenger of Allah (saas) said : "The prayer of repenters is due when the young camel can feel the sun's heat early in the morning." (Muslim)

Thus, the Ramadan is so called to indicate the heating sensation in the stomach as a result of thirst. Others said it is so called because Ramadan scorches out the sins burns the ground. Some said it is so called because the hearts and souls are more readily receptive to the admonition and remembrance of Allah during Ramadan, ad the sand and stones are receptive to the sun's heat. The framers of this beautiful language may have been

inspired by Allah (SWT) in naming this month Ramadan. Otherwise, the relation between the heat and its properties is miraculously similar to that of Ramadan. While the heat represents the matter that helps shape, form, and mold virtually every matter, from metal and plastics, to plants and living cells-Ramadan undoubtedly helps a serious believe remold, reshape, reform, and renew his physical and spiritual disposition and behavior.

#### **4. Neglecting Ramadan**

The blessed month of Ramadan comes once in a lunar calendar year for serious spiritual and physical training and rehabilitation of the believers. To neglect this Islamic obligation, with all its benefits, is a serious, unpardonable sin. Thus the warning from the Prophet (saas). Abu Hurairah reports the Messenger of Allah said: "Whoever breaks one day's fast of Ramadan without an authorized permission from Allah, he will never be able to redeem it (with another) day's fast, even if he fasts to eternity." (Tirmidhi)

The stern warning in this hadith for breaking fast in Ramadan is an indication of how serious the offense is perceived by the Shari'e, the Lawgiver. You may think that if you break a day, you can redeem it after Ramadan. Indeed, the missed day may be redeemed after Ramadan, but the hadith indicates that fasting for a lifetime (Siyaam Dahr), or to eternity cannot make up for the spiritual loss due to a reckless and deliberate break of a fasting day. It is abhorrent to neglect an Islamic rite which is your duty, but worse to neglect an obligation that belongs to Allah (SWT), such as the fast of Ramadan.

#### **5. Basic Elements of Fasting**

There are two basic elements that constitute the essence of Islamic fasting. The observation of these elements makes one's fasting acceptable.

The first element of fasting is abstinence of fast breakers from the break of dawn (Fajr) until sunset (Maghrib). By fasting, the Lawgivers, in no uncertain terms and free from any ambiguity and confusion, meant abstinence from food and drink and sexual relations. Any nourishment taken by mouth or nose, or drink of any sort, water, juices, milk, etc., should be avoided.

In this element, the period of observance is daily. It is not Islamic fasting when fasting takes place at night. Indeed, we are encouraged to break the fast without any delay as soon as the sun goes down. The proof for this first element is the saying of the Most High: "...And now associate with them and seek what Allah has ordained for you and eat and drink until the white thread of dawn appear to you distinct from its black thread." (Al-Qur'an 2:187)

This verse defines the time limits in which the worshiper is obligated to exercise abstinence. The first part of the verse is an indication of Allah's mercy upon the worshipers by making it easy for them during night hours in their relations with their spouses. For when verse (2:185) was revealed, it restricted daily as well as nightly relations with spouses. It was obviously difficult for the believers.

The second element of fasting is Niyyah (intention). In Islamic practices, Niyyah is highly rated. This remarkable element is not unique to fasting; it permeates every ounce of the believer's undertakings from Salaat, to Zakaat, to Hajj. It is the difference between whether the actions are religious or irreligious. For instance, fasting for political reasons, or as a weapon of passive resistance, or hunger strikes, or starving for dietary reasons, or weight control, or even on medical advice - all of these are not proper Islamic fasting, because they lack one main component: that is, the Niyyah. This is why Niyyah for fasting is to worship Allah by abstaining from fast-breakers from the break of dawn to sunset.

Hence, the elements of fasting are two: to worship Allah (SWT) by abstaining from fast - breakers, combined with intention

## **6. For Whom is Fasting Mandatory?**

The obligation of fasting is mandatory on a person who has fulfilled these requirements: He or she must be a Muslim, sane, must have reached puberty, must be healthy, and not in a state of travel. And for women, they must be in a state of purity (clean from menstruation and post childbirth bleeding). If a person fulfills the above prerequisites, fasting becomes valid and mandatory. Inferring from this definition, if one of these conditions is missing, the fast will be invalid. Indeed, it may be better to analyze each category of the definition.

### **Non-Muslim (Kafir)**

Fasting is not obligatory on a non-Muslim because he is not commanded to fast and even if he decides to fast and follows all the regulations, Allah (SWT) will not accept it. If he or she wants to fast the Islamic fast, he has to declare the Shahadah first, and only then will the fast be accepted. Similarly, the non-Muslim (Kafir) is not obligated to perform any Islamic duties. If he converts to Islam during the month of Ramadan, for instance, in the middle of the month, it becomes incumbent upon him to fast the remaining days. There will be no making up the days he missed before becoming Muslim. Allah (SWT) states: "Say to the unbelievers, if they desist from unbelief, their past would be forgiven of them..." (Al-Qur'an 8:38)

If one converts to Islam during the daytime in Ramadan, say 10:00 a.m. in the morning, he or she should observe the rest of the day in fasting. That is, from 10:00 a.m. until sunset, he should not break his fast.

### **Insane**

The insane or retarded person is not obligated to keep his fast because he is deprived of sanity, a key component on which religious duties depend.

### **Minor**

Similarly, the minor person is not obligated to observe fast (Sawm), however, it is

imperative that the parents or the guardians of the juveniles or adolescents encourage and urge them to fast so they will get used to it. It will be vital training for them in their worship, because they will not have any chance for training as soon as they reach puberty.

This hadith indicates that training minor boys and girls is highly recommended early in life, from about seven years of age for the spiritual, educational, and cultural upbringing of Muslim youth. It is the most powerful symbol of our religion.

## **7. DOUBT IN THE BREAK OF DAWN**

Even in the age of watches and alarm clocks, sometimes we doubt whether it is time to stop eating. In this event, one should eat and drink until he is certain and no longer in doubt about the break of dawn. No decision on Islamic deeds should be based on doubt. Allah (SWT) made the determining factor in every affair certainty. He (SWT) says:

"And eat and drink until the white thread of dawn appears to you distinct from its black thread." (*Al-Qur'an 2:184*) As I mentioned earlier, by "White thread" is meant the light of the day. And "black thread" is meant darkness of the night. Hence, the verse is explicit in that eating and drinking are permitted until the doubt and uncertainty are removed from your mind.

With the advance in time keeping technology, proliferation of wrist watches, and alarm clocks, the possibility of uncertainty is minimized, at least in the case of a believer who has a time keeping device. These time pieces can be set, not only to sound an alarm, but to call *Al Adhan*, recite some verse, or simply just tell you to get up for *sahuur*.

In the heartland of the Muslim world, the states take the responsibility for public announcements with the firing of cannons, or radio, or television announcements. There has evolved a special culture of Ramadan in many countries.

Working hours in some Muslim countries during Ramadan are changed to night, virtually changing or shifting daytime activities to night. In some countries, the governments are not involved in public announcements, but some families and volunteers over the years have taken the duty of wake-up calls by going door to door, in groups and individually in an attempt to wake up the city for Sahur.

It would be excellent if Muslims in non-Muslim countries try to adjust their annual vacations during Ramadan, so as to allow themselves the maximum use of the blessed month.

## **8. Oral Hygiene**

It is recommended to take care of the mouth, teeth and gums all the time, and more so during fasting. This can be achieved by the use of *siwaak*, a special stick or root (from *Arak* tree) that is used to cleanse the teeth and strengthen the gums. Although the best

*siwaak* is the one called *al-Arak* produced in Hijaz, in Arabia, it will suffice to use anything that will cleanse the teeth and remove the stain and refresh the mouth, like *halaal* toothpaste. In hadith by Abu Hurairah, the Prophet (saas) said: "Were not it because of fear of burdening my community (Ummah) I would have commanded them to use *siwaak* (brush their teeth with a chewing stick) before every ablution." (Malik)

In another hadith by 'Aishah (raa) the Messenger of Allah (saas) said: "*Siwaak* cleanses the mouth and pleases Allah." (Ahmad). Yet, in another report by Amir bin Rabeelah (raa), he said: "I saw the Messenger of Allah (saas) on numerous occasions chewing *siwaak* while fasting." (Tirmidhi)

In the first and second hadith, the importance of oral hygiene is underscored and encouraged on every occasion: before *wudu* for regular prayer, before reciting *Al-Qur'an*, before or after sleeping, when the mouth odor changes and, of course, during fasting. The third hadith indicates the Prophet (saas) took care of his teeth during the time of fasting.

## 9. THINGS PERMITTED DURING FAST

Although fasting entails restriction and abstinence there are certain things that are permitted for the faster to do. They include:

**Bathing** (*Al-Ghusul*), provided extra caution is taken to prevent water being swallowed by the mouth or nose.

**Al-Kuhl**, coloring the eyelids, or using eye drops, such as "Visine", is permitted whether the solution reaches the throat or not, the reason being the eyes are not the regular passage for food or nourishment. The strength of this case lies on the report by Anas bin Malik, (raa), who was the Messenger's cook for life. Anas used to color his eyes with kuhl while fasting.

**Kissing** (*Qublah*) for faster who can control himself, for married couples, expressing affection toward each other by kissing is inevitable. It may take place any time, day or night. To deny or prohibit this feeling during Ramadan would undoubtedly lead to some hardship. Therefore, the Lawgiver permitted a man to kiss his spouse on the cheek, hand, or mouth or hold hand and embrace, if he feels like it and can control his feelings.

**Rinsing Mouth** (*Madmadah*) Is one of the procedures of ablution (*wudu*). Therefore, the faster is permitted to rinse his mouth and cleanse his nose by sniffing in water and blowing it out. However, during fasting the process should be applied lightly for fear of swallowing water. The Messenger of Allah (saas) said: "...If you sniff water through your nose do it thoroughly unless you are fasting." (Abu Dawuud)

This hadith indicates two things: the faster who is making *wudu* or just wants to rinse his mouth should do it with utmost caution lest he may swallow the water and invalidate his fast. The hadith is a proof that the nose is a regular passage, like the mouth, of nourishment and as such takes it rules. Thus, if water passes through the mouth or nose to the stomach, the fast is invalidated. Not so with the eyes or ears.

But what if, during rinsing, you swallow water? Does that break the fast? If water reaches the throat unintentionally, or without negligence on your parts, the fast is still valid, but if water is swallowed intentionally, the fast is nullified.

## 10. Muslims Near the North or South Pole

Muslims who live close to the North or South Pole, where there are long nights expanding over six months, or where the days expand over six months respectfully, should fast by using the time zone of the country nearest to them.

## 11. THE WISDOM BEHIND FASTING

There are reasons and wisdom behind every single act in Islam, no matter how small. In time we may know the wisdom for behind some acts, and for others we may never know. *Salaat*, for instance, is a daily training for purifying the believer and reminding him that he is a member in a community of believers. Fasting, on the other hand, is an annual institution containing all conceivable attributes for human excellence. It is a training for the body and soul, a renewal of life, encouraging the spirit of sharing and giving. The following are some of the general benefits:

### Self-Restraint (Taqwaa)

Allah (SWT) states: "O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you that you may (learn) self restraint." (*Al-Qur`an*, 2:183)

This verse indicates the first lesson or wisdom to be gained in fasting, is self-restraint, (Taqwa) or the fear of Allah (SWT). That is to say, fasting instills in the heart the essence of consciousness of the Creator, moral courage both in secret and manifest, guiding the heart, the seat of emotion from spoilage and moral indecency.

It has been reported that Abdul Malik bin Al-Asma'e was in Makkah when Ramadan came, so he decided to leave for Taif to escape its heat. On the way, he met a Bedouin who told him that he was heading for Makkah. Abdul Malik asked him, "Aren't you afraid of Makkan heat in Ramadan?". The Bedouin replied, "It is from the heat (hellfire) I am running away."

### Behavior Modification

One of the most important things fasting affords the observer is helping him control or change his or her habits, the reason being human life is an embodiment of acquired habits. To change or control a habit is to wage a war on yourself. If *jihaad* is mandatory on every believer because it is the peak of the essence in Islam, and it entails changing habits, the fasting is the training ground for the inevitable that will occur. The believer cannot wage a war and hope to defeat an enemy if he or she cannot wage war against his

soul. Thus, the faster is admitted to the compulsory training opened only in Ramadan, the learning in this school is mandatory and succeeding or scoring high is mandatory, otherwise it is like you never entered. The Prophet (saas) said: "Many a faster receives naught from his fast except the pain of hunger and thirst."

## 12. The Wisdom Behind Fasting

### Heath Care

The benefits of fasting transcend guiding the faster from idle talk and indecent acts. It is a sentinel against disease, provided the faster follows the strict dietary rule: eat during fast breaking and avoiding over-eating. Allah (SWT) states: "...Eat and drink, but waste not by excess, for Allah loves not wasters." (*Al-Qur`an, 7:31*)

A great deal of ailments originate from stomach indigestion. This is why the Messenger of Allah (saas) says: "The son of Adam will never fill a container with something worse and evil than his stomach. It will suffice him some morsels (food) that will keep him on his feet, otherwise, he should divide his stomach into three parts: one third for his food, the other for his drink and the other third for his breath." (Ibn Hibban)

This hadith indicates that the stomach is the origin of harmful bacteria. Even in the age of sophisticated machines, you can hardly find a machine so fragile but yet so remarkably durable and efficient like the stomach. This is the machine that receives food particles, processes and refines them, and distributes the products to different parts of the body. This is a lifelong operation. For the non-faster, the stomach will have no chance for rest. When the stomach is empty, as a result of fasting, it gets well-desired rest, to renew and rejuvenate its energy. With the fasting, the stomach is forced to go through a discharge whereby harmful residue are eliminated through perspiration as the body searches for food during fast.

During fast, the system of secretion is organized, and this in turn benefits the blood pressure, inhibiting hardening of the arteries. The heart and kidney functions are enhanced as the work load tapers off. The fast helps to correct the problem of obesity and diabetes. Doctors over the years have used fasting as a prescription for certain ailments.

An American physician published a report on fasting and its benefits saying: "It is mandatory on every person who is sick to restrain from food certain days in a year whether he be wealthy or poor because if bacteria can find food in abundance in the body, it will grow and multiply. But with fasting it becomes weak." He then praised Islam. It should be considered as the wisest religion, for as it mandated fasting it has mandated health care. He continued: "Indeed, Muhammad, who brought this religion, was the best physician who succeeded in his teachings, for he called for prevention before ailment, that is apparent in fasting and the nightly prayer (Taraweeh) that Muslims observe after fast breaking every day of Ramadan, for these physical acts contain big benefits in digesting food." (Arkanul Arba`ah by Abul Hasan Nadwi)

## **13. The Wisdom Behind Fasting**

### **Patience**

Fasting helps in conditioning the heart, the soul, and the body on the virtues of patience, tenacity, and firmness in the face of adversity. Patience is the pinnacle of self-mastery, discipline and spiritual agility. Patience is to turn the phrase "I can't" into "I can." It is to say, the difficult is easy. It is an inner and psychological demolition of things perceived by others as impossible. Fasting helps in all these shades for the virtuous, patient person because, the conditioning is that if a believer can exercise patience, and forsake gourmet food and drink, and the exhilaration we enjoy while eating or drinking our favorites, as well as marital association, the gratifying of other normal appetites for a whole day, for a month the realization that the barrier between you and food is your consciousness of your Creator, can better make you able to exercise patience in virtually everything in life.

### **Social Outlook**

Socially, fasting is an expression of solidarity with the poor, the family and the whole society. This is a period in which the rich have first-hand experience of what it is to be poor, the pains the indigent suffers in normal living conditions. The process of disciplining resulting from Islamic fasting, instills in the rich the virtue of mercy, Rahmah, which is very important in terms of social well - being and proliferation of harmony. Allah bestows his mercy upon those who themselves are merciful to others. "Those who are merciful to others, the Merciful will have mercy upon them," the Messenger said. He continued, "Have mercy upon those on earth, and those in heaven will have mercy upon you." (Abu Dawud/Tirmidhi)

### **Family Ties**

Fasting strengthens family ties, especially in that the family is an endangered institution in western society. It helps the family gather together to break fast, at *Iftar*, and eat *sahuur* together at least twice a day for a month. The family even makes Salaat, together with the father as Imam.

Fasting enhances and energizes friendship, as Ramadan is known as the month of invitations and visitations. Friends, family members and neighbors extend invitations to each other to come to their homes to have Iftar together. The Messenger said, "When a believer invites you, you should respond." Besides, Muslims gather together in the Masjid for *taraweeh* and *ta'aleem*.