

Question: When should we observe fasts on sacred days?

ANSWER

Sacred days are the days that come after sacred nights. For example, Friday night is the night that connects Thursday to Friday.

The Night of Barat:

It is the 15th night of the month of Sha'ban. Its day is the day that follows this night; that is, its day is Sha'ban 15. One who wants to fast should fast this day. If it coincides with Friday or Saturday, one should also fast a day before it or after it. A *hadith-i sharif* says:

(Spend the night of 15th of Sha'ban performing acts of worship and its day fasting. Allahu ta'ala declares on that night, "Isn't there anyone to seek forgiveness, so that I shall forgive? Isn't there anyone to ask for sustenance, so that I shall give sustenance? Isn't there anyone who has trouble, so that I shall grant health and well-being? Anyone can ask for anything, so that I shall give it." This state lasts until daybreak.) [Ibn Maja]

The Night of Mi'raj

It is the 27th night of the month of Rajab. It is declared in a *hadith-i sharif*:

(Whoever fasts on the 27th of Rajab, rewards of 60 years' fasts are recorded for him.) [Imam-i Ghazali, Abu Musa al-Madani]

If it coincides with Friday or Saturday, one should also fast a day before it or after it.

The Night of Raghaib

It is the first Friday night of the month of Rajab. It is very rewarding (*thawab*) to fast on Thursday and to spend the night doing righteous deeds, such as engaging in acts of worship, knowledge, etc.

A *hadith-i sharif* purports:

(Allahu ta'ala forgives those who fast in the month Rajab.) [Ghunya]

The Day of Ashura

The 10th day of the month of Muharram is the day of Ashura. It is *makruh* to fast the day of Ashura just one day, so one should also fast the day before it or the day after it. Two *hadith-i sharifs*

say:

(Benefit from the virtue of Ashura. He who fasts on this blessed day attains *thawab* [reward]

much as the acts of worship of angels, prophets, martyrs, and the pious.)

[Shir'a]

(Oppose Jews by also fasting the day before or after the day of Ashura.) [Imam-i Ahmad]

The Night of Mawlid

It is the night between the 11th and 12th days of the month of Rabi' al-awwal. It is good to fast on the 11th or 12th day.

Our Master the Prophet used to fast on Mondays. When he was asked the reason, he stated, "I

t is my birthday. I am fasting to show my gratitude" (Documents of the Right Word).

The Day of Arafa

It is the day before Eid al-Adha. A *hadith-i sharif* says:

(The fast observed on the day of Arafa is equivalent to 1000 [voluntary] fasts.) [Tabarani]

It is *mustahab* to fast on the day of Arafa. Even if it coincides with Nawruz or Saturday, it will not be *makruh* if one fasts thinking that that day is Arafa. But it will be *makruh* if one fasts because that day is Nawruz or Saturday. It will not be *makruh*

if one fasts simply because it is Arafa.

Friday

It is very rewarding to fast on Fridays. A *hadith-i sharif* says:

(Whoever fasts on Friday, the reward of ten days of the Hereafter is recorded for him.) [B ayhaqi]

Since there are Islamic scholars who say that it is *makruh* to single out the day of Friday for fasting, one should not fast only on Friday, but should join it with Thursday or Saturday. It is stated in a *hadith-i sharif*:

(Do not fast only on Friday. Fast also the day before it or the day after it.) [Bukhari]

Fasting in the Month of Dhu'l-Hijjah

One should fast on the first nine days of Dhu'l-Hijjah. The purport of a *hadith-i sharif* is as follows:

(Whoever fasts on the first nine days of Dhu'l-Hijjah, for each fast, the reward of a year's fast is recorded for him.) [Abu-I Barakat]

Fasting in the Month of Muharram

Two *hadith-i sharifs* purport:

(The most virtuous fast after Ramadan fast is the fast observed in Muharram, Allah's month. The most virtuous *namaz* after fard *namazes* is the night *namaz*.) [Muslim, Ibn Maja, Tirmidhi, Nasai]

(If you have the intention of observing a voluntary fast, observe it in the month of Muharram because it is Allah's month. There is such a day in this month that Allah accepted the repentance of one of past nations. Similarly, on this day He forgives the sins of those who repent.) [Tirmidhi]

If one fasts the last day of Dhu'l-Hijjah and the first day of Muharram, one will attain rewards as if one fasted the entire year. **(Ey O?ul ?lmihali)**

Fasting in Rajab

It is declared in *hadith-i sharifs*:

(Haram months [the months that have to be esteemed] are Rajab, Dhul Qi'dah, Dhul Hijjah, and Muharram.) [Ibn Jarir]

(Whoever fasts on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday in *haram* months, the rewards of two years' acts of worship are recorded for him.)

[Tabarani]

(It is highly meritorious to fast one day and to eat the next in *haram* months.) [Abu Dawud]

(Seek forgiveness from Allahu ta'ala very often in the month of Rajab, for Allahu ta'ala has servants whom He sets free from Hell in every minute of the month of Rajab. Besides, there are such mansions in Paradise that only those who fast in the month of Rajab will enter them.) [Daylami]

(Allahu ta'ala forgives those who fast in the month of Rajab.) [Ghunya]

(Whoever fasts for one day at the beginning, for one day in the middle, and for one day at the end of the holy Rajab, the reward as if he fasted the whole of Rajab is given to him.) [Miftah-ul-janna]

Fasting in the month of Sha'ban

Our mother Hadrat Aisha stated:

(I never saw the Messenger of Allah fast in any month more than he did in the month of Sha'ban. He sometimes used to fast all of Sha'ban.) [Bukhari]

Upon being asked why he was fasting more frequently in the month of Sha'ban, our master the Messenger of Allah answered:

(Sha'ban is a very virtuous month, but people are unaware of it. Deeds are presented to the Lord of the worlds in this month, and I want my deeds to be presented while I am fasting.) [Nasai]

Two more *ahadith* say as follows:

(The most virtuous fast after Ramadan is the one observed in the month of Sha'ban.) [Tirmidhi]

(Allahu ta'ala prepares a place in Paradise for the one who fasts for three days in Sha'ban.) [Ey O?ul ?lmihali]

Those who have weak constitutions should not fast after the 15th of Sha'ban and should prepare themselves for the fast of the holy Ramadan, which is obligatory to observe. However, those in good health can spend most of, even the whole of, Sha'ban fasting.

Fasting in the month of Shawwal

It is very rewarding to fast in the month of Shawwal. It is stated in *hadith-i sharifs*:

(Whoever fasts for six days in the month of Shawwal will be as sinless as if he were a newly born.) [Tabarani]

(After Ramadan, if a person also fasts for six days in Shawwal, he is considered to have

fasted for a year.) [Ibn Majah]

Fasting on Mondays and Thursdays

It is more rewarding (*thawab*) to fast on Mondays and Thursdays compared with on other days.

A *hadith-i sharif* purports:

(Deeds are presented on Mondays and Thursdays. I want my deeds to be presented while I am fasting.) [Tirmidhi]

Fasting for Three Days Every Month

It is highly meritorious to fast for three days every month. Two *hadith-i sharifs* purport:

(Fasting for three days every month is as rewarding as fasting all the year round.) [Bukhari]

(Whoever fasts on the 13th, 14th, and 15th days of a lunar month earns rewards as if he fasted all the year round.) [Nasai]

Note: The above-mentioned fasts observed on sacred days are voluntary. Observing a voluntary fast brings many rewards. A *hadith-i sharif* purports:

(He who fasts for one day for Allah's sake outside Ramadan gets away from Hell as much as the distance a good racehorse travels in a century.) [Abu Ya'la]

If fasts are observed on the above-mentioned sacred days, they bring more rewards. But Islamic scholars state that the value of and the rewards for voluntary fasts are not even a drop of water compared to an ocean. For this reason, one who has a day or days to make up should intend as follows when observing the above-mentioned fasts, **"I intend to make up for the earliest Ramadan fast that I missed."**

Even if one does not have a day or days to make up, one should still intend so when observing these fasts, for these fasts are counted as voluntary fasts then. If one has a day to make up that one has forgotten, such a fast makes up for it. By doing so, one not only pays one's debts of fasts but also earns rewards of the fasts that are advised to be observed on sacred days.

The Beginning and the End of a Month

Question: It is stated, **"Whoever fasts for one day at the beginning, for one day in the middle, and for one day at the end of the holy Rajab, the reward as if he fasted the whole of Rajab is given to him."**

Are the beginning of Rajab its 1st day, the middle of it its 15th day, and the end of it its 30th day?

ANSWER

No, they are not. The beginning of it refers to its initial days. The middle of it refers to the days that are close to the days in the middle of it. The end of it refers to its final days.

Intention for Fasting

Question: When observing voluntary or make-up fasts, if one observes a fast on Thursday and also wants to observe a fast on Friday, what intention should one make in order to earn much more rewards?

ANSWER

If one has fasted on Thursday and also wants to fast on Friday, it would be better if one

intended, "I should fast today with the intention of following the scholars who stated that it is *mu stahab* to fast on Friday."

Question: I have missed fasts. Can I perform them in Rajab and Sha'ban?

ANSWER

There is nothing wrong with observing voluntary or make-up fasts in Rajab and Sha'ban, but it is better not to delay make-up fasts without a valid excuse. One who observes make-up fasts in these months also attains the rewards that are given for voluntary fasts in these months. **(Nawa dir-i fiqhiyya)**

Make-up or voluntary fasts can be observed consecutively or intermittently in Rajab and Sha'ban, but one must not single out Friday or Saturday for fasting. However, there is no religious obstacle if one fasts either on Thursday and Friday or Friday and Saturday.

When keeping fasts in Rajab and Sha'ban, one with missed fasts should intend, "I intend to observe the earliest Ramadan fast that I missed." Even if one does not have missed fasts, it is still permissible to observe make-up fasts