

ALI 509: Physical, Moral, Ethical and Spiritual aspects of fasting in Shahru Ramadhan

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Taqwa – Ultimate Goal

- يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ {183}
- لَعَلَّكُمْ – Taqwa not guaranteed
- It denotes - maybe, perhaps
- Taqwa is the ultimate goal
- Different levels of fasting
- Different stages of Taqwa
- Important to understand how the individual must struggle to achieve higher levels of taqwa for himself, family and community



Goals and Objectives

- Review the effects of fasting on the health of the individual, especially during long fasts
- Precautions to ensure “healthy fasting”
- Understand the different levels of fasting, especially the moral, ethical and spiritual fast
- Goal is to ascend towards higher levels of Taqwa at individual, family and community level



Remember the 5 “M”'s

1. **M**onitoring your health
2. **M**eal Planning
3. **M**aking the most of fasting
4. **M**edication management
5. **M**ovement



Monitoring Your Health

- Measure parameters that are readily available
 - Diabetics – Blood sugar
 - Hypertensives – Blood Pressure
 - Changes in weight
- Warning signs
 - Dehydration
 - Low/High blood sugars in diabetics – trembling, headaches, dizziness, sweating, extreme tiredness, paleness, blurred vision, mood changes, extreme hunger



Meal Planning

- Avoid Greasy fried foods and heavy sweets – sugar peak and then immediate decline
- Avoid increased caffeine and energy drinks
- Maintain diet close to your regular non fasting diet
- Small frequent meal – avoid carbohydrate loading





Meal Planning

- Water, water, water – avoid fruit juices (high in sugar), Cola drinks (high in sugar, caffeine and acid)
- Dehydration is a major concern
 - can cause thrombosis (blood clots) and constipation
- Caffeine – diuretic – can make dehydration worse
- Consider Alkaline water



Meal Planning

- Make sure you wake up for Suhoor
 - eat protein, complex carbohydrates such as cheese, rice, yoghurt, whole wheat bread with feta cheeses – will help you throughout the day
- Some cereals have high sugar in it
- Fibre, fruits, vegetables – will avoid constipation and feeling of hunger



Meal Planning

- Prevent heartburn
 - Avoid spicy hot foods
 - Avoid eating just before going to sleep if possible
- A good healthy diet in Ramadhan can have significant impacts on blood pressure and cholesterol
- Maintain the healthy eating habits after Ramadhan



Making the Most of Fasting

- Focus on unhealthy habits that you may be able to give up
 - STOP SMOKING – BEST TIME TO DO THIS
 - USING SMOKING AIDS SUCH AS Nicotine Gum, Patch etc
- Control Junk Food ingestion
- Develop self discipline in areas of health as well as spirituality
- Canada health food guide - http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index_e.html



Medication Management

- Make sure you visit your Family Physician BEFORE the Month of Ramadhan
- Certain medications will need to be adjusted and maybe even stopped temporarily depending on the condition and the medication
 - Diabetics
 - Hypertensives
 - COPD
 - Congestive Heart failure
 - Anti depressants and sleeping pills
 - Others



Special Precautions

- Diabetics – Must visit the doctor prior to Ramadhan
 - Will need focused monitoring of blood sugar and will require medication changes
 - Will need to monitor kidney function especially if prone to dehydration
 - Risk stratification – High risk, medium risk, low risk
 - Will require changes to diabetic medications
 - Aggressive meal planning



Special Precautions

- Heart Medications
 - Hypertension – may require medication adjustment
 - Congestive heart failure – may require changes to diuretic
 - Coronary Artery disease – May require minor changes
- **DO NOT ADJUST YOUR OWN MEDICATIONS WITHOUT THE ADVICE OF A PHYSICIAN**



Movement

- Exercise – Important during fasting but need to be smart
 - Avoid intense exercise especially during mid day
 - Try mild exercise such as a walk about 1 hour prior to iftaar
 - Avoid dehydration
 - Park you car a little further away so you are at least walking to the car
 - Continue after Shahru Ramadhan



In Conclusion ...

- Most people will have no problems with their health whilst fasting in Shahrul Ramadhan provided you plan it out properly and focus on the 5 “M”s.
- Healthy fasting strategies will allow you to be able to concentrate and focus on the spiritual benefits of this great holy month



People Unable to fast

- Feelings of Guilt
- A. Javadi Amuli
 - Gift from Allah (SWT)
 - Accept it, do not reject it
 - There is pleasure of God in it
- Jurisprudential Fast - Most basic fast level
- **Fasting just at a physical level, only feel the pains of hunger and thirst and the difficulties therein.**



Jurisprudential fast

- Most basic fast level
- **Fasting just at a physical level, only feel the pains of hunger and thirst and the difficulties therein.**
- **It makes you think as though Allah wants to make you suffer and that is why He has ordered you to fast.**



Moral and Ethical Fast

Every member of the body fasts.

Anticipated from the believers.

Imām Zayn al-'Abidīn ('a) in his prayer on the arrival of the holy month of Ramadān humbly prays:

“O Allāh, bless Muhammad and his Household;
inspire us with knowledge of its excellence, veneration of its
inviolability, and caution against what You have forbidden within it,
***and help us to fast in it by our restraining our limbs from
acts of disobedience toward You and our employing them
in that which pleases You, so that we lend not our ears to
idle talk and hurry not with our eyes to diversion,
we stretch not our hands toward the forbidden and
stride not with our feet toward the prohibited, our bellies
hold only what You have made lawful and our tongues speak only
what You have exemplified, we undertake nothing but what brings close
to Your reward and pursue nothing but what protects from Your punishment!***”



Moral and Ethical Fast

- Story of Holy Prophet (SAW) and old lady in Madina
- Develop virtues of morality
- Having a divine color
- Reflecting and Manifesting names of God within ourselves



The Spiritual Fast

The highest level of fasting disengage oneself from other than Allāh (SwT). Every thought, speech, action, etc. is solely for Allāh (SwT). Protects his heart from other than Allāh (SwT).

The reward of such a fast is God, as He has stated:

“The fast is for Me and I am its reward.

Nothing else could be the reward of such a fast.

gain insight (*ma'rifah*) about **God** the Almighty

Insight into yourself (**your nafs and inner self**),

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The Spiritual Fast

- How do you gain experiential knowledge of God
- Manifest His names to the full
- Realize your potential
- Experience the presence of God



Change your perspective



- A month of spring of Quran and dua - This is the month in which the Qur'an was revealed and therefore we must use this month to better UNDERSTAND the Qur'an (not just to better read it)
- A month of reflection and contemplation - we must break our shell of ritualism and take time to reflect and ponder in this month

Thank You!!

Questions? Comments?

