

# ALI-713: The Laws of Fasting (Sawm)

Session 1: *Niyyah*, Exemptions,  
Travel



# Overview

- ❖ Should children who are not *bāligh* fast?
- ❖ How do I fast? Timing and *niyyah*
- ❖ What if I *get sick*?
- ❖ Should *expecting mothers* or mothers who are *feeding* fast?
- ❖ What effect does travelling have on my fasting?
- ❖ Who is a “frequent traveler” or what constitutes “work travel”?
- ❖ What is my *watan*?



• **Why should we fast?** •



# Fasting is an Obligation

- O you who have faith! Prescribed for you is fasting as it was prescribed for those who were before you, so that you may be God wary. *(2:183)*
- So let those of you who witness the month [of Ramaḍān] fast in it *(2:185)*
- Imam al-Bāqir (a): Islam is founded upon five: salāt, zakāt, hajj, *sawm*, and walāyah. *(al-Kāfī)*



• **Should children who are not** •  
***bāligh* fast?**



# Fasting of a *non-bāligh*

*Imam Bāqir (a) said:*

“And at the age of 7, we ask our children to fast to their capability, either half of the day or more or less, and we order them to break their fast when they become hungry or thirsty. This is so that they become used to *fasting*. Thus, you should ask your [male] children to fast at the age of 9 and tell them to break their fast when they are thirsty or hungry.”

*(al-Kāfī)*

# Practical Suggestions

- Fasting before physical maturity has developed: should **not** be encouraged
- Fasting after the physical maturity has developed, but before coming of age: should be encouraged to break fast when they are thirst or hungry

# Practical Suggestions

- Avoid asking young children, “*Are you fasting today?*” or somehow hint it is better to fast for a child who has not come of age to fast the entire day



• **How do I fast?** •



# Fasting is from Fajr till Maghrib

**Fajr:** The true dawn. **Maghrib:** When the redness in the Eastern sky has faded out into darkness

Fasting needs to take place *from when one is **certain** that fajr has set in until one is certain that the time for maghrib has arrived*

- There is no such thing as a time of *imsāk*

# Fasting is from Fajr till Maghrib

Timings need to be ascertained with conviction – timetables and software can help to attain conviction but should be used with care

Unintentionally eating/drinking/etc. past fajr time and being careless about its arrival ☾  
*invalid fast + qadā*

# **In places where there is no night or no complete darkening takes place**

- If light in the sky never disappears but the sun sets and there is a time of darkening and a time of lighting up, the start of the relative lighting up is taken as fajr

# In places where there is no night or no complete darkening takes place

- If there is no night at all, it's *wājib* to move to another place during *shahr* Ramadān (Ayatullah Sistani)
- Rules of weakness, harm and excessive difficulty may apply

# ***Mustahabb to perform maghribayn prayers before iftār***

Unless:

- Someone is waiting for you
- Doing so will cause one to not be able to recite the prayer with proper attention

# Having a *Niyyah* (Intention)

A *niyyah* is something that you must have while performing an act of worship.



# I must keep the *niyyah* throughout the fast

- Wanting to break the fast, or even being unsure about continuing the fast - even if I repent and don't actually go ahead with it – invalidates the fast!

# I must keep the *niyyah* throughout the fast

- Example: It's really hot outside! I step out and suddenly find myself doubting whether I have the resolve to actually stick it out. "I think I deserve some juice," I whisper to myself.

# It's the 30th of Sha'ban and I'm not sure if the moon was seen yet!

Fasting is not *wājib*, but if I fast, I should not *intend* that this is a fast for the month of Ramadān!

# It's the 30th of Sha'ban and I'm not sure if the moon was seen yet!

If I am fasting and then I find out it's the month of Ramadān, I will convert my *niyyah* to the month of Ramadān. If I am not fasting,

- If I haven't done anything to violate a fast, I must start fasting (if it's before ***zuhr*** time!)
- Otherwise, I have to do ***imsāk*** (refrain from doing anything that would break a fast) and ***qadā***



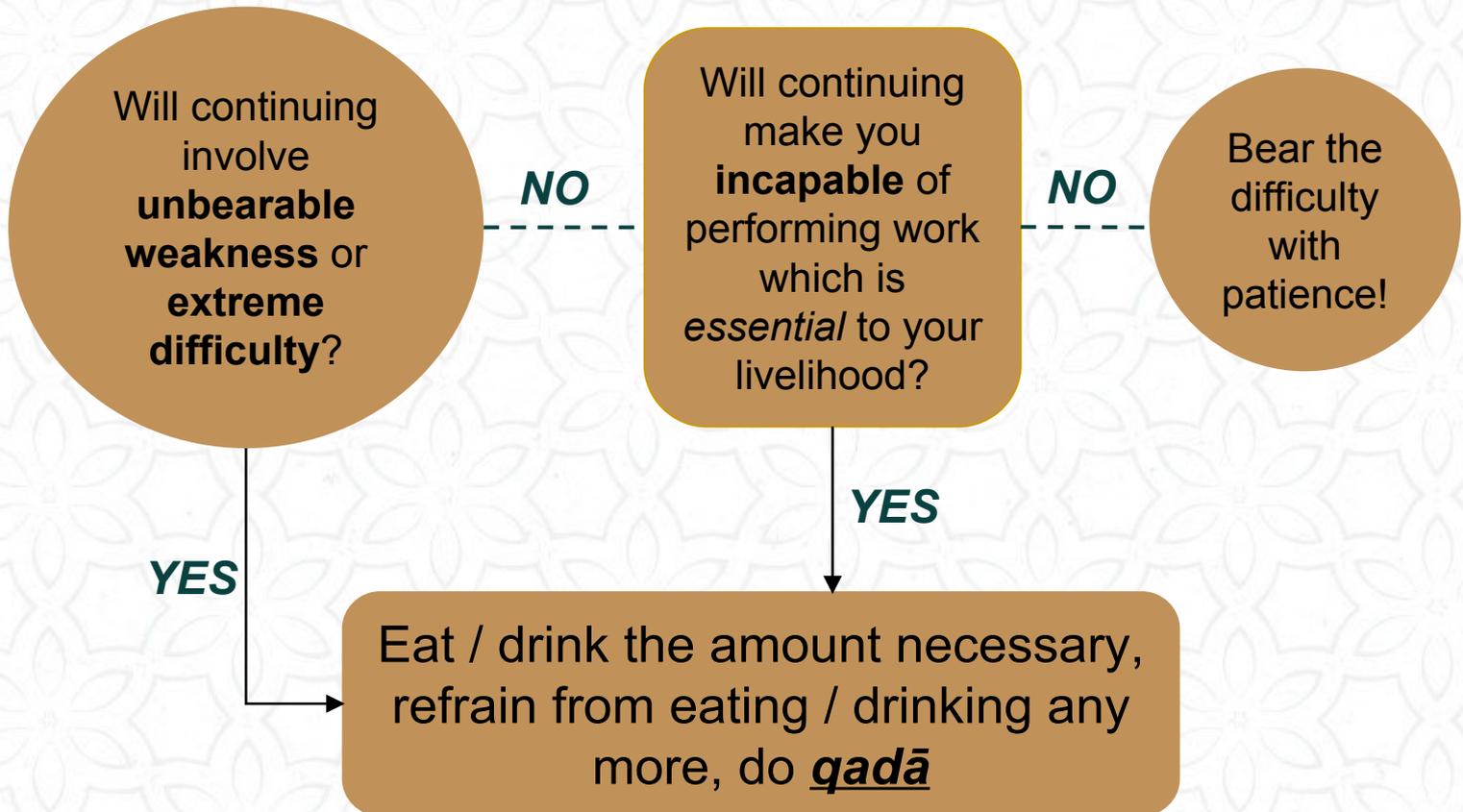
• **What if I can't bear it?** •



# Is my nine-year-old daughter too young to fast?

- Fasting is an obligation on those who have come of age unless it entails significant harm or unbearable difficulty
- The human body is amazing at being able to adapt

# What if I'm fasting and things get difficult?



# What if fasting will make me sick or harm me?

If I fear (*based on rational grounds*) that I will be harmed by fasting, fasting is not obligatory

*Example:* By fasting, I won't be able to take some heart medicine at the right time which could in turn result in heart issues.

Consequence: ***Qadā***

# What does the doctor say?

Doctor's opinion can be the source of the fear of harm

- *Example:* I go for a checkup, and the doctor tells me that fasting is not good for my diabetes situation. His/her word causes me to fear that fasting will cause me harm.

But, if I'm certain fasting won't cause me any harm despite what the doctor says, I must fast

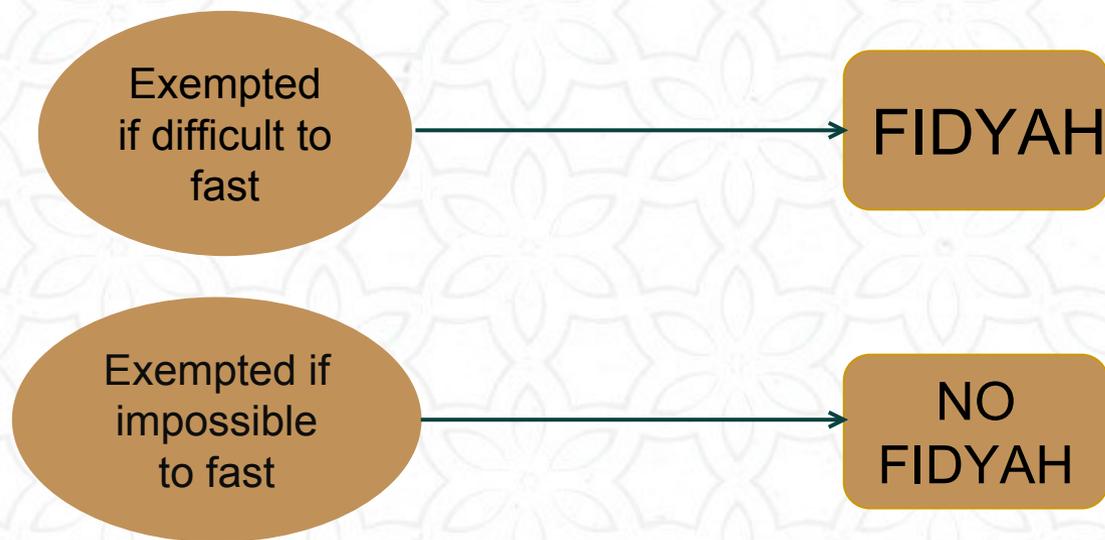
# Fasting is invalid if I'm not sick but...

If I fear (*based on rational grounds*) I will get significantly sick by fasting.

- *Example:* I just recovered from an infection and today is my day to recuperate. If I fast, I fear that I won't recuperate properly and the infection will come back.

Consequence: ***Qadā***

# What about the elderly?



**Note:** According to **Ayatullah Khamenei**, if an elderly person regains ability to fast, it is *iẖtiyāt wājib* to make up the fasts that are missed.



• **What if I get sick?** •



# **Fasting is not obligatory if I'm sick and...**

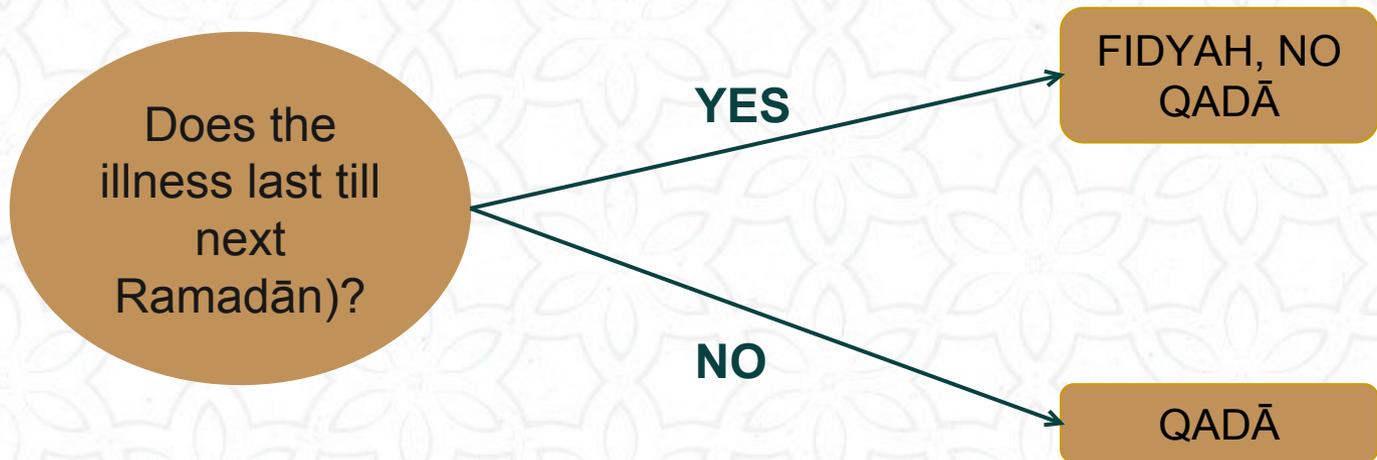
I fear (*based on rational grounds*) it will:

- intensify my sickness
- prolong my recovery
- increase the pain.

# Examples of one's responsibility when sick

- I am sick and I need to constantly drink fluids to get better (fasting is *invalid*, *qadā* is **necessary**)
- I have a mild cough and fasting might keep my throat feeling uncomfortable (fasting is *valid* and **necessary**)

# What is the consequence if I don't fast due to sickness?





**Should expecting  
mothers or mothers who  
are feeding fast?**



# If a woman is expecting...

If she fears (*based on rational grounds*) that fasting will harm her or the child's health, fasting is not obligatory, rather it is prohibited.

*Example:* After the ultrasound she is told by the doctor to eat frequent meals to ensure proper growth of the child.

# If a woman is expecting...

Consequence of woman not fasting in scenario describe on previous slide:

If she is close to delivery:

***qadā + fidyah***

If she is not close to delivery:

***qadā***

# If a woman is breastfeeding and her milk supply is low

- If she *fears (based on rational grounds)* that fasting will harm her or the child's health, fasting is not obligatory.
- **Ayatullah Sistani:** *Ihtiyāt wājib* for her to use an alternative if available.



✦ **What effect does travelling have on my fasting?** ✦



# If I travel, I am exempted from fasting and my fasting is invalid unless...

- I am planning to stay in a place for **ten days or more**
- I am considered to be a **'frequent traveler'**
- I am traveling to **my 'watan'**
- The travel is **sinful**

# Am I allowed to travel during the month of Ramadhan?

- Yes, although doing so can be *makrūh* in some circumstances
- It is *ih̥tiyāt mustahab* for a traveler to stay away from food, drink, and sexual intercourse during the daytime of the month of Ramadhan

# I must keep my fast if I travel and...

I cross the city boundary while departing  
from my hometown after *zuhr*

**OR**

I cross into the city boundary in my  
hometown or place of temporary residency  
before *zuhr* and I haven't committed any  
act that would break a fast

# I am allowed to break my fast when traveling

As soon as I intend to travel the required distance (*approx. 22 km*) away from the city border and I have crossed the *hadd al-tarakkhus* (where a traveler has gone far enough to be hidden from the sight of city-dwellers)

- *Note:* The ruling is slightly different if I am traveling away from a place of temporary residency.



• **Who is a “*frequent traveler*”** •  
**or what constitutes “*work travel*”?**



# Who is a “frequent traveler” or what is “work travel”?

**Ayatullah Sistani:** a “frequent traveler” is one who prays full and can fast despite traveling.

**Ayatullah Khamenei:** when going on “work travel” one prays full and can fast despite traveling.

# What is “work travel”?

**Ayatullah Khamenei:** If my work is in a different city than my hometown, then when I travel to work, I pray full and can fast.

# What is “work travel”?

**Ayatullah Khamenei:** If I ever stay in a place for 10 days in a row and don't go to work, then the next time I start up traveling for work again, for the first trip I will be considered a traveler but for the second and onwards I will pray full.

# Who is a “frequent traveler”?

**Ayatullah Sistani:** I become a frequent traveler when I intend to be in a state of travel (for work or other purposes) for either:

- 6 months of the upcoming year, and in those 6 months I will be traveling for a total of at least 60 days

**OR**

- 3 months of the upcoming year and 3 months in the next year, and within those months I will be traveling for a total of at least 30 days

# What about other travels?

**Ayatullah Khamenei:** I should still pray shortened and not being able to fast on non-work travels.

**Ayatullah Sistani:** If I'm a frequent traveler, I pray full and am able to fast on all travels.



✿ **What is my *watan*?** ✿



# What is my *watan*?

A *watan* is a hometown. When I am in my *watan*, I can fast and I pray full, even if I'm there for *less* than 10 days

# How does a place become *my watan*?

**Ayatullah Khamenei:** Having an intention to settle down in a place for 10 years. But even if you are living somewhere for a single year, you are not considered a traveler.

# How does a place become *my watan*?

**Ayatullah Sistani:** Having an intention to stay in a place long enough so that I am no longer considered a traveler there (for example, 1.5 years or more)

# How does I place stop becoming my *watan*?

If I move from my *watan* and I'm confident that I won't come back to live there again that place is no longer a *watan* – even if it was my birthplace.