



# Ramadan FAQs

Summary of Q&A with  
Shaykh Waleed Basyouni

**PREGNANCY**

**ZAKAH**

**EXAMS**

**8 vs. 20**

**TRAVELLING**

**PERIODS**

**SICKNESS**

**FIDYA**

**I'TIKAF**





## INTRODUCTION

### Worship Rooted in Knowledge

There is no doubt that worshipping Allah ﷻ with knowledge is extremely important. The obligations (wājibāt) in Islam exist at different levels, and the highest of these obligations are the pillars of the religion. For this reason, it is important that we take great care to fulfill the act of fasting in Ramadan with correctness and sincerity.

Many people do not realise that worship performed with knowledge carries far greater reward than worship done without understanding. Knowledge multiplies your intention, and *innamā al-a'mālu bi'l-niyyāt* – actions are judged by their intentions. When fasting is rooted in knowledge, it becomes a conscious act of adherence to the Sunnah of our beloved Prophet ﷺ, seeking Allah's pleasure and His great reward, rather than because of culture, habit, or because it's what we're told to do. It is essential to experiencing the month as it was intended.

### Virtues of Fasting

Fasting Ramadan is a pillar of Islam that the Prophet ﷺ observed every year of his life after it became obligatory, and the Muslim ummah has upheld this act of worship throughout history. The Prophet ﷺ said that whoever fasts a single day for the sake of Allah is distanced from the Hellfire by the span of seventy years. Imagine, then, the reward for one who fasts every Ramadan, year after year, across their entire lifetime!

Allah ﷻ has given fasting a unique status, saying: *“Every good deed of Adam's son is for him except fasting; it is for Me. and I shall reward (the fasting person) for it.”* Its reward is not quantified, nor fully known – it belongs to Allah alone. The Prophet ﷺ also said: *“Fast, for there is nothing equal to it.”*

Fasting is a shield – protecting the believer from the Hellfire, forbidden desires, and trials. Ramadan is so much more than abstaining from food, drink, and intimacy. It has rules, boundaries, and wisdoms beyond the fast itself.

### Purpose of this Document

This document, based on Shaykh Waleed Basyouni's interview on the AlMaghrib podcast, has been prepared to clarify common questions, remove confusion, and support worship rooted in knowledge. We ask Allah ﷻ to accept this work, and enable us all to benefit fully from this blessed month of Ramadan.



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## STARTING RAMADAN

### How do I know when to start Ramadan? Should I follow moon sightings, calculations, my local masjid, or another country?

You should start Ramadan based on the local Muslim community and masjid where you live. This is the most practical and unifying approach.

All four schools of fiqh agree that Muslims in one locale should fast together and celebrate Eid together. **Unity** is more important than your personal preference between different valid scholarly recognised methodologies.

For the reader interested in learning about the differing views and why there is controversy, we encourage you to read our in-depth article [Understanding Moonsighting Differences](#).

## MAKING UP MISSED FASTS

### What if I realise I still owe fasts from a previous Ramadan?

You must start making them up as soon as possible, even if it's close to the next Ramadan. You should also ask Allah for forgiveness.

If you have delayed making them up before the next Ramadan **without a valid excuse**, the majority of scholars say this is sinful.

In that case, they say you must:

- Make up the missed fasts (i.e. they carry over after Ramadan)
- Pay fidya (feeding one poor person for each missed day)

Fidya does not replace the fast in this matter – it is in addition to making it up.

If the delay in making up the fasts was due to a **valid reason** (such as illness, pregnancy, breastfeeding, or travel), then there is no sin and no fidyah, only making up the fasts when you can.



## MENSTRUATION & FASTING

### Can a woman fast during her period?

A woman must not fast during menstruation, by agreement of all scholars.

### If my period ends in the middle of the day, should I stop eating until Maghrib?

The stronger opinion is that you do not have to stop eating and drinking until the end of the day. This is because you are not fasting that day. Fasting starts at dawn. The same applies for a traveller who reaches their destination or a sick person who recovers in the middle of the day.

### What if bleeding stops close to Fajr?

If bleeding stops before Fajr, she must fast that day – even if she performs her ghusl after Fajr. Ghusl is not required before fasting.

If she wakes after Fajr and is unsure whether purity happened before Fajr, the default assumption is that menstruation continued, so she does not fast.

### Can I pretend to fast and pray, so my family doesn't know I am on my period?

We sometimes hear about sisters who wake up for suḥūr while on their period so that nobody notices. Others even fast because they don't want anyone to know they're menstruating. This is a **cultural issue** and has **no basis in Islam**.

There is nothing shameful about having a period; it's not something to be embarrassed about, it's simply a bodily function.

It must be stated clearly: it is ḥarām for a woman to fast while she is on her period. This is by scholarly consensus (ijmā'), and doing so is sinful. Pretending to pray would be even more serious, with some scholars considering this to be **kufṛ**.

For the reader interested in learning about the detailed fiqh of menstruation, irregular bleeding, and post-partum bleeding, stay tuned for our new article coming soon to the [Faith Circle website](#).



## MENSTRUATION & READING QURAN

### Can I read the Quran on my menses?

The majority of classical jurists held that a woman during her period should not touch the physical muṣḥaf.

However, there is broad agreement among many scholars that she can **read** the Quran from memory, read from the muṣḥaf if wearing gloves, or read from a digital device.

Some modern scholars made an interesting distinction: they said that if an app displays an actual image of the muṣḥaf, then it should be treated like a physical muṣḥaf and not touched. But if it is simply text and does not resemble the printed muṣḥaf, then it is fine. That said, this view represents a very small minority. The overwhelming majority of contemporary scholars hold that digital text does not take the same rulings as the printed muṣḥaf.

Shaykh Waleed holds the minority view, which is that a woman is allowed to touch the physical muṣḥaf even during menstruation.

## REWARD OF MENSTRUATING WOMAN

### Do I miss out on reward when I am unable to pray or fast?

No, when a woman does not fast because of her period, she is **obeying Allah** ﷻ as the days she does not fast are by divine command. She should continue to worship Allah and make the most of Ramadan in many other ways that He loves: making dhikr, seeking knowledge, helping others, feeding the fasting, showing patience, etc.

## GHUSL & FASTING

### Does ghusl have to be done before Fajr for the fast to be valid?

No. Ghusl is not a condition for fasting. If menstruation ends or a person is in janābah before Fajr, the **fast is valid** even if ghusl is done after Fajr. The Prophet ﷺ himself delayed ghusl until after Fajr and still fasted.



## PREGNANCY & BREASTFEEDING

### Does a pregnant or breastfeeding woman have to fast? What does she do instead?

If fasting causes hardship or concern for the mother or child, she is allowed to break the fast. Regarding how she should make it up, this is the scholarly position we lean towards:

The woman may choose one of two options:

- She can make up the missed fasts later (this is the majority opinion)
- She can pay fidya instead (feeding one poor person per missed day)

If she only missed a few days or just one Ramadan, **making them up** is generally better. But if she has missed multiple Ramadans due to repeated pregnancy or breastfeeding, fidya may be easier for her and is acceptable.

### Should she try to fast first to see if she can handle it?

The majority of scholars say it is on her expectation of difficulty. If she knows there will be no hardship on her, she should fast. But if a doctor advises against fasting, or she knows there may be difficulty, or she worries for herself or her child, she should not fast.

Allah wants ease for His servants and loves when we accept His concessions.

## EATING & DRINKING PUBLICLY

### If someone is excused from fasting, can they eat & drink in public?

Yes, they may eat and drink in public. This is more of a conversation on manners, rather than halal or haram.

In Muslim countries, eating publicly is discouraged out of respect for others.

In non-Muslim countries, one should still be considerate of Muslim spaces.

For example, it is better to avoid eating in the masjid during the day, and to refrain from teasing your fasting family with how delicious your food looks!



## BRUSHING TEETH, GUM, SHOWERS

### Do brushing teeth, miswāk, gum, or showers affect the fast?

- **Brushing teeth** with toothpaste is allowed as long as nothing is swallowed
- **Miswāk** is allowed
- **Chewing gum** breaks the fast because of what reaches your stomach
- **Hot showers** do not break the fast
- **Steam rooms** may break the fast if the steam is thick and hydrating

### Is it better not to brush my teeth, because of the hadith that Allah loves the breath of the fasting person?

This hadith does not promote having bad breath or poor oral hygiene! You can still brush your teeth. The message is, do not stop fasting just because it may cause bad breath. This hadith teaches us that even something normally unpleasant can become beloved when it is caused by acting for Allah's pleasure.

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "By the One in whose hand is my soul, the odor coming from the mouth of a fasting person is more pleasant to Allah Almighty than the scent of musk. Allah said: He leaves his food, his drink, and his passions for My sake. The fast is for Me and I will reward him for it with a good deed ten times like it." (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1894).

## EXAMS, WORK & SPORTS

### Can a major exam, important work commitment, or an intense sports event justify breaking my fast?

No. These are not valid excuses.

However, if significant symptoms develop such as dizziness, light headedness, or severe dehydration during the activity, then the fast may be broken.

This is **based on the actual symptoms**, but not because of the exam or work itself.



## ILLNESS & FASTING

### When does illness allow or require breaking the fast?

If fasting is:

- Life-threatening → breaking the fast is **obligatory**
- Causing long-term harm → breaking the fast is **obligatory**
- Causing severe discomfort or dehydration → breaking the fast is **recommended**

Mild hunger, tiredness, or headaches which are normal to experience during fasting are not valid excuses.

### Who do I consult for medical advice on if I should fast?

Medical advice can be taken from a Muslim or non-Muslim doctor, as long as they understand and respect the religious importance of fasting.

## MEDICATION & PROCEDURES

### Which medical treatments break the fast and which do not?

#### The fast is broken by:

- Anything entering through the mouth, nose, or anus
- Oral medication
- Nutritional IVs
- Nicotine patches
- Vitamin shots
- Receiving blood transfusions

#### The fast is not broken by:

- Donating blood
- Non-nutritional injections such as local anaesthetic for dental work or simple procedures

## ELDERLY & FASTING

### Do elderly people have to fast? What if fasting is difficult for them?

If fasting causes hardship, elderly people are exempt. The majority say they must pay fidya (one meal per day).



## INTENTION

### Do I have to make my intention to fast out loud?

Intention is in the heart. Saying it out loud is not required and is a **bid'ah**, since it was never prescribed by the Prophet or his companions to do before acts of worship.

## SUḤŪR & IFTĀR

### When does suḥūr end?

A common question is: When do we stop eating? Before suḥūr, the default state is not fasting, and you move into fasting with certainty. If you know for certain that the adhān is called exactly on time, then when you hear it, you should stop eating and drinking.

If the vessel is still in your hand when you hear the adhān, a small sip may be completed.

### When does ifṭār start?

At ifṭār, the default state is fasting, and you cannot leave that certainty unless you are sure that Maghrib has entered. Because of this, scholars have said:

- If someone breaks their fast thinking Maghrib has entered and they were careless, they must make up the day.
- But if they genuinely tried their best and reasonably believed it was Maghrib time, then their fast is valid. Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity.

This often happens at events or public ifṭārs where someone calls adhān early and people reasonably assume it is time. In that case, they are excused.

## TASTING FOOD

### Can I taste food while I'm fasting if I am cooking?

It is permissible to taste a small amount on your tongue and spit it out.



## FASTS OWED BY THE DECEASED

### What if someone dies while still owing fasts?

If the deceased had a valid excuse for not fasting, nothing is required. But if they had **no excuse** for not making up their fasts, family members may either:

- Fast on their behalf
- Or feed the poor on their behalf (pay fidya)

## GIVING FIDYA

### Where should I give my fidya, here or overseas? What if overseas is cheaper?

The answer is: **look at where the need is, and check your intention.** You should not choose an overseas fidya simply because it is cheaper. Allah knows your intention.

If you are doing it to **maximize benefit**—and you are genuinely feeding more people by sending your fidya overseas—then *al-ḥamdu lillāh*, that is good. If you can feed 60 instead of 30, that is praiseworthy.

At the same time, this should not come at the expense of your **local community**. We cannot ignore the people around us while sending everything elsewhere. If there is real need locally, they must also be taken care of.

### How can I give fidya?

There is flexibility in how fidya is given:

- It can be actual meals
- It can be money so the person buys their own food
- It can be a grocery gift card
- The food can be cooked or uncooked
- It can be given to one family or multiple families

For Australians wanting to pay fidya online, you can use the linked [National Zakat Foundation fidya calculator](#).



## TRAVEL & FASTING

### When does travel allow breaking the fast? Can I not fast from the beginning of the day, if I know I will travel that day?

You may break the fast **once travel has actually begun** - when you leave the boundaries of your local town. Some scholars even suggest being safe by delaying breaking the fast until you are on the plane.

### What if Ramadan starts differently where I travel?

If you travel to a place that started Ramadan earlier or later, you should follow the local community.

If this means you end up fasting fewer than 29 days total, you must make up the missing day after Ramadan. If you started with a community a day earlier, and in another community they started a day later and end Ramadan after 30 days, then you do not fast beyond 30 days. Technically you would have experienced '31 days' of Ramadan between those communities. You would not fast for the last day.

The simple rule is: **Never fast less than 29 or more than 30.**

### What if someone travels all the time, like a pilot or a trucker?

People who travel constantly for work should still fast, unless illness occurs.

## FASTING IN EXTREME LATITUDES

### What if daylight hours where I live are incredibly long?

You still have to fast **from Fajr to Maghrib**. But if you become sick while fasting, you can break it. The hardship or sickness you experience during that day would be the reason for breaking your fast, not the long day itself.

### What if I live somewhere where it is always night, or always day?

The majority of scholars say you should **go by the closest city or urban area** where there is a difference in day and night. Then, use their average day and night times.



## INTIMACY & KAFFĀRAH

### What happens if a couple has intercourse while fasting in Ramadan?

This is a **major sin** that requires repentance and kaffārah. The severity of the sin is reflected in the difficulty of the kaffarah. The options are as follows:

1. Freeing a slave (where applicable)
2. Fasting 60 consecutive days
3. Feeding 60 poor people **only if unable to fast**

The 60 days of fasting must be **consecutive**. If a day is missed without a valid excuse (like sickness or menstruation), the 60-day count restarts. The obligation for this kaffārah is on the man, not the woman. The exception is if the woman initiated, in which case the obligation is now on both.

### Does foreplay break the fast?

Allah says regarding the fasting person, “He has left his food, drink and desires for My sake”. By this principle, it is better to avoid engaging in foreplay. This is especially true if someone fears they may spoil their fast.

## WET DREAMS

### Do wet dreams break the fast?

Wet dreams do not break the fast, as there is no control over them.

## MASTURBATION

### Does masturbation break the fast?

Masturbation is considered haram based on the opinion of the majority of the scholars. It would **break the fast** for both men and women and be considered a **major sin** for breaking the obligatory fast without a valid excuse, but it does not require the 60 days kaffārah that is specific to sexual intercourse.



## TARĀWĪḤ AT THE MASJID

### If someone enjoys praying alone at home more, can they skip tarāwīḥ in the masjid?

While praying at home is valid, it is **strongly encouraged** to pray tarāwīḥ in the masjid:

- It became the practice of the Salaf
- The Prophet ﷺ said whoever prays with the imām until he finishes receives the reward of the entire night
- The masjid brings community, learning, reminders, du‘ā’, and unity

If you are a role model and consistently pray at home, it can unintentionally discourage others from caring about going to the masjid.

## TARĀWĪḤ FOR WOMEN

### Is it better for women to pray tarāwīḥ at home or in the masjid?

Ibn ‘Umar reported the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) as saying; *Do not prevent your women from visiting the mosque; but their houses are better for them (for praying).* (Sunan Abi Dawud 567)

For women, praying at home has greater reward for the prayer itself, based on the aforementioned hadith.

However, there are many factors to consider. The **masjid may offer greater overall benefit** by encouraging a woman to pray for longer, increasing her understanding, and helping her attain more khushu’. There may be beneficial educational programs, meeting other sisters there, spreading salam and many other virtuous actions that could only take place at the masjid.

The masajid were filled with women during the Prophet’s ﷺ time, even though they heard what he said.



## 8 VS. 20 RAK' AHS

### Is 8 or 20 rak'ahs of tarāwīḥ correct? Is leaving early sinful?

The reality is that the early generations did not fixate on numbers the way we do today. When the Tābi'īn asked 'Ā'ishah about the night prayer of the Prophet ﷺ, she spoke about how **beautiful** the prayer was and how **long** it was. She only briefly mentioned he did not exceed 11 rak'ahs—and still, that was not her main point. The focus was quality, not quantity.

The number has changed historically:

- The Prophet ﷺ consistently prayed **11 rak'ahs** (including 3 witr).
- It was narrated that Umar expanded this to **20 rak'ahs** so each rak'ah could be shorter, making it easier for people.
- In Madīnah, it even reached **36 rak'ahs**, because people wanted to “match” the reward of the people of Makkah, who would perform ṭawāf during breaks.

The point was never the number—it was **enjoying the ṣalāh**. Imams should consider what is sustainable for their congregation.

This matter is so easy and there is no bid'ah in these different choices. What is not acceptable is completely rushing through 20 rak'ahs with no presence.

## COMING LATE FOR TARĀWĪḤ

### I came late to the mosque and haven't done Isha. The congregation have already started tarāwīḥ! What do I do?

Remember: one rak'ah of 'Ishā' is better than all of tarāwīḥ. We should take more care to do our Fardh prayers in the masjid.

But if you came late, there are two options:

1. Join the tarāwīḥ congregation with the **intention** of doing 'Ishā'. When the imām finishes, stand up and complete the remaining rak'ahs.
2. Or, **pray 'Ishā' alone** on the side, then join tarāwīḥ. But do not start a second jamā'ah in the mosque! Pray quietly and be mindful of others.



## MUŞĤAF & PHONES IN TARĀWĪĤ

### Reading from a muşĥaf or phone during tarāwĭĥ – is it allowed?

Yes, reading from a muşĥaf or phone and following along during tarāwĭĥ is allowed, and the prayer is valid according to the strongest opinion of the fuqahā'. It is authentically reported that 'Ā'ishah prayed behind her servant while he recited from the muşĥaf.

This is permitted because the action is considered **part of the salah**, not an external distraction. This applies whether:

- You are following the imām to learn or focus.
- You are not fluent in Arabic
- You are using it simply to follow the recitation

### What about reading translation?

Looking at a translation—whether on a muşĥaf or a phone—is also permitted. Translation is treated as a form of tafsīr. There is precedent in our tradition for allowing someone to read tasfir while in salah.

Looking at it with the eyes—without speaking or reading aloud—does not invalidate the prayer.

The same principle applies to briefly looking at explanatory text, as long as one is not actively reading or reciting it.

## MODERN TOOLS FOR UNDERSTANDING

### Can I view live translation on a screen or listen to it with an earpiece?

Using **live translation**, screens, or **earpieces** to understand the du'ā' or recitation in tarawih is permissible and can help people connect more deeply with the Quran. These are modern issues (*nawāzil*), and can be especially beneficial for:

- New Muslims
- Non-Arabic speakers
- Those learning the Qur'ān



## MASJID HOPPING

### Can I go to different masājid in Ramadan or is it better to stick with one?

If someone goes to different masājid because the recitation helps their khushū', the programs are beneficial, or the environment encourages them in worship, that is fine. You may pray in different masājid as long as it increases your focus and **enjoyment of the ṣalāh**.

The jurists mention that praying in a larger jamā'ah and walking a longer distance to the masjid bring more reward, but they did not restrict a person to only one masjid.

## KHATM AL QURAN

### Is it a sunnah to read the whole Quran in Ramadan?

Yes, the sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ was to read the Quran at least once in Ramadan. He used to do this every year with Jibreel. In the last year of his life, he did it twice. You do not have to do this specifically in Salah or in Taraweeh.

### Should I make dua when I complete the Quran?

There are reports from the Salaf—such as Anas ibn Mālik—who would gather his family, friends, and neighbours and make du'ā' after completing the Qur'ān while sitting, outside of ṣalāh.

There are different opinions about whether this dua can be made in salah or not. The Ḥanbalī school allowed du'ā' khatm al-Qur'ān within ṣalāh, and Imām Aḥmad mentioned that this was the practice of the people of Makkah. Some scholars considered making du'ā' khatm al-Qur'ān inside ṣalāh to be bid'ah.

Traditionally, this du'ā' was made separate from witr salah. A fatwā in Saudi Arabia led to a change in practice, and now you will often find that du'ā' khatm al-Qur'ān is joined with the du'ā' of witr.

In the end, this is all good practice. Completing the Qur'ān is a good deed and **asking Allah by virtue of that good deed** is something beautiful.



## I'TIKĀF

### What is i'tikāf?

I'tikāf is secluding oneself in a masjid for an extended period of time for worship. It can be any time in the year. It does not have to be in the last ten days of Ramadan, although that is a Sunnah practice and thus highly recommended.

It must be a meaningful duration focused on **worship**. Camps, sports, movies, and entertainment are not part of i'tikāf.

### Can women make i'tikāf?

Yes, i'tikāf is Sunnah for both men and women. The Prophet's ﷺ wives would make i'tikāf. It can not be done at home, only at the masjid.

### Should I bring a tent to i'tikāf?

A tent is not required for i'tikāf. The Prophet ﷺ used to use one for the sake of privacy. Large setups that block space or inconvenience others are discouraged. I'tikāf should increase your spirituality without harming others' worship.

One year, when many of the Prophet's ﷺ wives decided to make i'tikāf at the same time and their multiple tents filled the masjid, the Prophet ﷺ told them to remove them. He did not perform i'tikāf that Ramadan, but instead did it in Shawwal.

## COMMON RAMADAN MISTAKES

### What are some common mistakes to avoid this Ramadan?

- **Neglecting the obligations:** fasting, 5 daily prayers, zakat al fitr
- **Persisting in haram actions:** backbiting, watching and listening to evil
- **Delaying iftar**, when the Prophet told us to hasten
- **Skipping suhoor**, when the Prophet told us there is barakah in it
- **Irritability, anger, and bad manners.** Take it easy, have a soft tone with people!
- **Talking during reminders.**
- **Poor masjid etiquette** (blocking exits, bad parking, poor oral and body hygiene)