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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of the God the Merciful Beneficent

(We begin)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُم تَتَّقَوْنَ

'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'. Chapter 2:183

Fasting is prescribed as the fourth fundamental practice in Islam. This means that all Muslims should fast. Here God has prescribed fasting and has indicated that fasting should eventually bring about Taqwa / Self-Restrains.

Then God qualifies fasting with the following details;

أَيَّامًا مَعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخْرَى وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامٌ مَسْكِينٌ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

(Ramadan fasting is during the) known days. But should any of you be sick or on a journey, let it be a [similar] number of other days. Those who find it straining shall be liable to atonement by feeding a needy person. Should anyone do good of his own accord, that is better for him, and to fast is better for you, should you know. Chapter 2:184

The message from God is that fasting is better for you if you actually knew (the status of the fasting person is extremely high in the sight of God). However, there are instances when fasting will not be compulsory and other measures are prescribed as a substitute. Nevertheless, fasting is strongly recommended.

God tells us that,

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِنَ الْهُدَى وَالْفُرْقَانِ

The month of Ramadān is one in which the Qur'ān was revealed as guidance to mankind, and clear explanation of the guidance. Quran 2:185.

Here God is informing us that the Quran was revealed in Ramadan. The clear connection between the importance of the Quran and fasting is made known (this issue will be further explored below).



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The Prophet ﷺ said,

إِذَا دَخَلَ شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ فُتَحَتْ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ، وَغُلِقَتْ أَبْوَابُ جَهَنَّمَ، وَسُلْسِلَاتُ الشَّيَاطِينِ

"When the month of Ramadan starts, the gates of the heaven are opened and the gates of Hell are closed and the devils are chained'. Bukhari 1899

The Prophet ﷺ said that God says;

‘الصِّيَامُ لِي، وَأَنَا أَجْزِي بِهِ’

"...(Your) fasting is for me and (only) I will reward for it.." *Bukhaari (1761) and Muslim (1946)*

God has elevated the status of fasting in Ramadan; the reward for fasting is special, such that only God himself will award each person from unknown untold rewards. This is something to think about.

Fasting is about self-restraint. It is important to know self-restraint is not restricted to abstinence from food, but rather abstinence from all non-moral conduct as well. Examples of this include: abstaining from the cultivation of non-Islamic (immoral) thoughts and practice, thinking the worst of people rather than giving the benefit of doubt, not speaking harsh painful words to people or cursing, or plotting evil or engaging in activity that is harmful to anyone including oneself.

Fasting also extends to promoting excellence in conduct by helping people, restraining one's anger, forgiving people and even extends to speaking less. Fasting is a means of giving a boost to the spiritual element of life so that the balance is maintained.

Ramadan focuses on spending quality time in reflection on the messages and universal teachings of the Qur'an and, furthermore, learning about God and God's importance and relevance.

Does God advise us what type of food to eat?

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِلّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ إِيمَانًا تَعْبُدُونَ

'O you who believe eat from the good of what we have provided, and show your gratitude to Allah if it is he you truly worship'. Chapter 2-172 Qur'an.

Allah has focused on the word Tayyibaat here in describing the type of food discussed. Allah is advising us as to the type of halal food he would like us to eat.

Tayyibaat is plural of the Arabic word Tayyib which means Good. In essence, the Quran is saying eat that food which is Halal and good for you.



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For example, processed food may have its benefits such as ease and speed of preparation. However, would it qualify under the terminology of Tayyibat? Its preservatives and many additives, and the long period of its refrigeration may preclude it from being Tayyib / good for you. Other such examples may include excessively sugared drinks and salted foods.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيْبًا وَلَا تَتَبَعُوا خُطُواتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ

'O People, Eat from the provisions of the Earth of what is Nutritiously Allowed, and do not follow the footsteps of Shaytan as he is certainly a clear enemy'. Chapter 2:168 Qur'an.

The ruling of Halal / Permitted (food) is clear and very well known, for example which meats are Halal are known and which type of meats are Haram (impermissible) are also clearly known. For example, Blood and Carrion (Animals found dead without slaughter) are not permitted. They have clear health risks. Whilst correctly slaughtered meat is clearly Halal.

However, Tayyibaat food is not just Halal food, but food that has nutritional value or is good for you. Therefore, all food that are Halal will not always be Tayyib. For instance, it is known that all fish are Halal, but not all fish are good for your health, therefore not all fish are amongst the Tayyibat.

You may already know the Prophet's ﷺ favorite foods included; Grapes, Melon, Dates, Figs, Pomegranate, Olives, Honey, Mushroom, Milk and Wheat, and lots of water. These are examples of Tayyib foods.

The Prophet ﷺ also liked to eat meat, which has its benefits. However, he practiced the idea of limiting the consumption of meat. This is because over eating certain type of food that is Tayyib loses its Tayyib value when over consumed.

What was the Prophet's ﷺ advice as to the quantity of food consumption?

"مَا مَلِأَ آدَمِيٌّ وَعَاءَ شَرَّاً مِّنْ بَطْنٍ بِخَسْبٍ إِذْنَ اللَّهِ يُقْمَنَ صُلْبَهُ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَا مَحَالَةَ فَثُلُثٌ
لِطَعَامِهِ وَثُلُثٌ لِشَرَابِهِ وَثُلُثٌ لِنَفْسِهِ"

'It is sufficient for the son of Adam to eat that amount which will support his back'

If this is not possible, then a third for food, a third for drink, and third for air (ease of breathing)'.

Al-Tirmidhi (2380) Sahee

The Prophet ﷺ practiced balanced eating and eating in moderation and avoiding over indulgence. He advised the drinking of water and not to over drink.

It is recommended that fasting student follow the advice of the Quran and the practices of the Prophet ﷺ. There is consistent advice on the importance of good food and its consumption. These healthy eating benefits focus on the health of your bodily and extend to the soul (Ruh).



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يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ حُذُوفٌ فَلَا تُنْهَا عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ وَكُلُّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُّ أَوْتَارٍ وَكُلُّ وَادِعَةٍ لِلَّهِ إِنَّمَا يُحِبُّ
الْمُسْرِفِينَ.

'O children of Adam display your good (dress well) at your places of worship and eat and drink but refrain from excessiveness, as He does not love those who waste'. Chapter 7:31 Qur'an.

The subject of this verse ends in 'Israaf' / 'Excess' also termed as 'Waste'. God informs us that he does not love those who eat or drink in excess. God attaches his love to a person with good eating practices, and therefore distancing those who waste food from his love. Therefore, these good food practices can only assist the one fasting in Ramadan both in health and in soul, by attracting God's love.

A very important quality which fasting brings about is that the fasting person is more in control of his body by breaking snacking habits, remaining free from a heavy stomach and reducing cravings for sensual pleasure. The connection between certain foods and pleasure is one that seems to exist and can be subtly addressed through fasting.

The Prophet ﷺ also said;

من قام رمضان إيماناً واحتساباً غفر له ما تقدم من ذنبه

Whoever stands for prayer in Ramadan out of certainty of faith and expectation of reward his previous sins will be forgiven. Bukhari (Volume 3, Book 32, Number 226) & Muslim.

The Prophet ﷺ teaches us that the night prayer during Ramadan carries great weight. The benefits of fasting gradually move from bodily benefits through fasting in the day to spiritual nourishment through prescribed prayer at night.

We therefore learn that the fasting person receives great biological advantages through self-restraint during the daylight hours whilst earning God's pleasure. He is further connected to God in the hours of darkness through night prayer where the Quran is recited and pondered over.

Does God intend difficulty or ease for you?

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ

'Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire hardship for you'. Chapter 2:185.

God wants us to know that throughout the journey of life God chooses ease for us over hardship. The Prophet ﷺ said the Deen / religious matters are easy. If the prophet ﷺ was presented with two options, he would always select the easy of the two.



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We should always try hard to fulfil God's obligatory commandments. This is because they carry many known and unknown benefits. However, there will be instances when this is not possible, and it is only in those instances when the exceptions and substitutes apply.

If you are on medication or medically ill, and you know you cannot fast, then fasting is not obligatory for you on those days.

Ease is at the core of Deen / religious matters. God will not place upon any individual any obligation that a person cannot bear.

A Sahabi (contemporary of the Prophet ﷺ) came to him and asked, "Should I leave my camel whilst I attend prayer in the Mosque?" The Prophet ﷺ advised him to secure his camel first, and to then to pray in the Mosque. The Prophet ﷺ is teaching that one should first be obliged to make certain that one's own responsibilities are taken care of, and then one should carry out one's religious obligations.

Those who have exams during the earlier periods of the month of Ramadan are advised to fast few days in the month of Shaban (immediately before the month of Ramadan). These Shaban Fasts will prepare the body to fast during the month of Ramadan. The fasting student will feel these benefits and be strengthened through them. This was the known practice of the Prophet ﷺ.

مَنْ كَفَرَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ إِلَّا مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقُلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌ بِالإِيمَانِ وَلَكِنْ مَنْ شَرَحَ بِالْكُفْرِ صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ عَذَابٌ مِّنْ اللَّهِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

Whoever disbelieves in Allah after having believed, except the one forced to (renounce his religion) whilst his heart is content with faith (his faith is secured) But those who (willingly) accept disbelief; on such is the wrath of God, and they shall receive a grievous chastisement. 16: 106 Qur'an

God tells us that if a person is forced to pronounce words that contradict his faith, whilst really holding true belief in his heart, then he will not be held liable in the sight of God for his outwardly coerced pronouncements.

There is an important lesson here. When circumstances, internal or external constrain you from carrying out the obligations that the Qur'an and the Sunnah (practices of the prophet) teach, then carry out what is permissible as a valid substitute. For instance, if water for ablution is unavailable then ablution can be performed with dry earth. If prayer cannot be performed standing then it can be performed sitting and if not sitting then lying down. If you cannot afford the Journey of Hajj then it can be delayed until you can afford it. If you do not reach the threshold of paying Zakat (religious compulsory charity / taxation) then you are not obliged to pay, and if you are not in control of that wealth then Zakat will be delayed.



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وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةً طَعَامٌ مِسْكِينٍ

"And those who are not able to do it may affect a redemption by feeding a poor person."

Chapter 2:184 Qur'an.

This is a very interesting verse about those who did not fast in the month of Ramadan, in the earliest Islamic history, out of choice for whatever personal reasons. Such persons were commanded to pay a daily fine of feeding one poor person for each fast missed. However, there are differing scholarly opinions on this subject of a 'fine for not fasting'. It was previously acceptable to choose to feed a poor person as a substitute to fasting. Tafsir Tabari and Tafsir Ibn Kathir.

The following guidelines will assist in effective time management during the blessed month of Ramadan with a view to excellent Exam preparation.

- Be encouraged to pray Esha in the Mosque (the final obligatory prayer of the day)
- The Prophet ﷺ was clear that the night-time optional prayers (later called Taraweeh) be offered at home. If one has the ability then such prayer can be offered in the Mosque
- Pray twenty Rakaa / units of prayer behind the Imam or alone and listen to the recitation of the Qur'an
- Eat Suhur / breakfast in the small hours of the mornings (before dawn)
- Perform your Fajr Salaat (Dawn prayers) in your local Mosque if nearby

Should you have exams and you feel you are not able to cope with the above then the following can apply;

- Pray your Esha at home as soon as the time begins.
- Perform only eight Rakaa of Taraweeh at home and recite smaller surahs / chapters of the Qur'an or single Ayahs. This should not take long
- Go to bed early and have good sleep
- Make sure you eat Suhur and drink sufficient water before dawn
- Then study a little till Fajr begins and pray your Fajr/Dawn prayer and sleep. This will not take long
- Wake up sufficiently early to be prepared for your day and ask Allah for assistance in your exams
- It is important that you wake up for Suhur as the summer fasts are longer. Suhur was the practice of the Prophet ﷺ. Such intake of food will help you in your fast and your day.

Should you require more information and advice or have some concerns you wish to discuss on the above topic then please contact [Musa Admani](#) at the City University Chaplaincy.



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