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3- Merit of fasting Ramadan and praying Qiyam during the nights

with explanation of important rulings that could be unknown 

From `Abdul-`Aziz ibn `Abdullah ibn Baz to all Muslims, may Allah lead me and them in the path of believers, and guide me and them to deep comprehension of the Sunnah and the Qur'an, Amen!

As-salamu `alaykum warahmatullah wabarakatuh (May Allah's Peace, Mercy, and Blessings be upon you!)

This is some brief advice concerning the Sawm (Fasting) of Ramadan, spending its nights in prayer, the virtue of competing to do good deeds in it, with an explanation of some important rulings that some people may not know.

It was authentically reported from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) that he used to herald the glad tidings of the advent of the month of Ramadan to his Sahabah (Companions of the Prophet) and inform them that all the doors of mercy and Paradise are opened in this month, the doors of Hell are closed, and devils are chained in fetters. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: [«When it is the first night of the month of Ramadan, the devils and rebellious jinn are chained up and the gates of Hell are closed, and not one gate of it is opened. The gates of Paradise are opened, and not one gate of it is closed.»](#)

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And a caller cries out: 'O seeker of good, proceed; O seeker of evil, desist.' And Allah has those whom He redeems from the Fire, and that happens every night.) The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: [«There has come to you the month of Ramadan, a month of blessing, in which Allah covers you with grace, sending down mercy, forgiving sins and answering supplication. Allah looks at your competition in doing good therein, and boasts of you before His angels. So show Allah goodness from yourselves, for truly the wretched person is the one who is deprived of the Mercy of Allah during this month.»](#)

And the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: [«Anyone who fasts the month of Ramadan, out of Iman \(Faith\) and Ihtisab \(confident anticipation of Allah's Reward\), will have their past sins forgiven. And anyone who spends the nights of Ramadan in Qiyam \(optional Night Prayer\), out of Iman and Ihtisab, will have their past sins forgiven. And anyone who spends Laylat-ul-Qadr in Qiyam, out of Iman and Ihtisab, will have their past sins forgiven.»](#)

[«Every good deed of the son of Adam would be multiplied, a good deed receiving a tenfold to seven hundredfold reward. Allah \(may He be Glorified and Exalted\) says: With the exception of Sawm \(Fasting\), for it is for Me and I shall reward for it; one abandons their desire and food for My Sake. The fasting person will have two joys: a joy at the time of Iftar \(breaking the Fast\), and a joy when they meet their Lord. And the mouth odor \(of a fasting person\) is sweeter to Allah than the fragrance of musk.»](#)

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There are many Hadiths indicating the merit of fasting Ramadan, praying Qiyam during its nights, and the merit of Sawm as an act of worship.

Therefore, believers must seize this opportunity to benefit from Ramadan, hasten to do good deeds and avoid sins, and do their best to fulfill the duties enjoined by Allah on them; especially the Five Obligatory Daily Prayers which are the Pillar of Islam and the greatest Faridah (obligatory act of worship) after the two Shahadahs (Testimonies of Faith). So every Muslim man and woman must keep performing them regularly on their due time with tranquility and Khushu' (the heart being attuned to the act of worship).

For men, one of the most important obligations of Salah is to offer it in congregation in the Masjid (mosque) which Allah has ordered to be raised and that His Name be glorified therein. Allah (Glorified and Exalted be He) says: ﴿And perform As-Salât (Iqâmat-as-Salât), and give Zakât and bow down (or submit yourselves with obedience to Allâh) along with those who bow down (in prayer).﴾ And: ﴿Guard strictly (five obligatory) As-Salawât (the prayers) especially the middle Salât (i.e. the best prayer - 'Asr). And stand before Allâh with obedience [and do not speak to others during the Salât (prayers)].﴾ And: ﴿Successful indeed are the believers.﴾ ﴿Those who offer their Salât (prayers) with all solemnity and full submissiveness.﴾ until the Ayahs saying: ﴿And those who strictly guard their (five compulsory congregational) Salawât (prayers) (at their fixed stated hours).﴾ ﴿These are indeed the inheritors﴾ ﴿Who shall inherit the Firdaus (Paradise). They shall dwell therein forever.﴾ The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

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﴿The covenant between us and them is Salah; anyone who abandons it has committed Kufr (disbelief).﴾

The second most important Faridah after Salah is giving Zakah (obligatory charity) as Allah (Glorified and Exalted be He) states: ﴿And they were commanded not, but that they should worship Allâh, and worship none but Him Alone (abstaining from ascribing partners to Him), and perform As-Salât (Iqâmat-as-Salât) and give Zakât, and that is the right religion.﴾ Also: ﴿And perform As-Salât (Iqâmat-as-Salât), and give Zakât and obey the Messenger (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم) that you may receive mercy (from Allâh).﴾ The Great Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His noble Prophet (peace be upon him) indicate that those who do not give the Zakah due on their wealth shall be punished for withholding it on the Day of Resurrection.

The most important matter after Salah and Zakah is to fast Ramadan as it is one of the Five Pillars of Islam mentioned in the Hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him): ﴿Islam is built on five (pillars): the testimony that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; performing Salah (Prayer), giving Zakah (obligatory charity); fasting Ramadan; and going on pilgrimage to the House (Ka'bah).﴾

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Muslims must protect their fasting and night praying during Ramadan against any words and deeds forbidden by Allah. By fasting, what is meant is to obey Allah (Glorified be He), honor the sacred Ordinances of Allah, struggle with oneself to go against its desires and obey its Lord; training it to be patient against committing what Allah has forbidden. It is not meant to only give up food, drink and

the rest of things that break Sawm. Therefore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: (Sawm (Fasting) is a shield; so when one of you is fasting they should not speak bad words or be boisterous, and if some person fights or insults them, let them say, 'I am a fasting person.')

And: (Whoever does not give up false speech (i.e. telling lies) and acting in accordance with it, and ignorant conduct, Allah has no need of them giving up their food and drink.)

Through these texts and others, it is learned that one who fasts must take care not to do what Allah forbids and be steadfast in doing what Allah has enjoined, hoping that Allah may forgive them, set them free from the Fire, and accept their fasting and night prayers.

As to the matters that people may not be aware of, they are as follows:

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First among them: It is obligatory on the Muslim to fast out of sincere Iman and hope of reward from Allah; and not for showing off or to gain a reputation; or imitating people, or following the customs of one's own family or country. The only incentive that should really motivate one to fast is belief that Allah has made it obligatory and expectation of reward from the Lord. The same is true for praying Qiyam in Ramadan. A Muslim should perform it out of sincere Iman and hope of reward from Allah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: (Anyone who fasts the month of Ramadan, out of Iman (Faith) and Ihtisab (confident anticipation of Allah's Reward), will have their past sins forgiven. And anyone who spends the nights of Ramadan in Qiyam (optional Night Prayer), out of Iman and Ihtisab, will have their past sins forgiven. And anyone who spends Laylat-ul-Qadr in Qiyam, out of Iman and Ihtisab, will have their past sins forgiven.)

Also among the matters that people may not know the ruling on them: The wounds, nosebleeds, or vomiting that a fasting person may experience during Sawm; or water or gasoline getting into the throat unintentionally, all these matters do not invalidate one's Sawm. However, whoever vomits deliberately, their fast will be invalidated as the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated: (Whoever vomits involuntarily is not required to make up the fast, but whoever vomits deliberately, must make up the missed fast.)

Another matter: The case of a fasting person who delays Ghusl (ritual bath following major ritual impurity)

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till Fajr (Dawn), or a woman who delays bathing after her menstrual period or post-natal bleeding till the break of Fajr. If she sees that she has become pure (the bleeding has stopped) before Fajr, she must fast and it is permissible for her to delay Ghusl till after Fajr; but not till sunrise as she must bathe and offer Fajr Prayer before sunrise. The same applies to one who is Junub (in a state of major ritual impurity); they are not allowed to delay the Ghusl till after sunrise. They must perform Ghusl and offer the Fajr Prayer before sunrise. Men must hasten to bathe so that they can attend Fajr Prayer with the congregation.

Things that do not invalidate Sawm include: Blood tests and injections, but are non-inclusive of nutritional injections. However, if it is possible to delay these procedures till night, this is better and safer because the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: (Leave that which causes you doubt for that which does not cause you doubt.) The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said: (Anyone who guards against doubtful matters has protected their religion and honor.)

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Further matters that people may not know the ruling on them:

It is required that one is tranquil while offering Salah, whether it is obligatory or supererogatory. All the Sahih (authentic) Hadiths reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) indicate that tranquility is a Rukn (integral/Pillar) of Salah without which the Salah is invalid. This means calm immobility and Khushu' while performing Salah, and not to hasten until every joint returns to its natural position. Many people offer Tarawih (special supererogatory night Prayer in Ramadan) while inattentive and distracted and without tranquility. They perform it quickly only pecking at the ground. The Salah performed this way is Batil (null and void), and the one who prays this way will not be rewarded for it.

Further matters that people may not know the ruling on them:

Some think that Tarawih Prayer should not be less than twenty Rak'ahs (units of Prayer). While others think it is not permissible to offer more than eleven or thirteen Rak'ahs, and all this is incorrect; it even contradicts textual evidence.

The Sahih Hadiths point out that Night Prayer is optional and has no certain limit of Rak'ahs that is not permissible to exceed. It is authentically reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to offer eleven Rak'ahs in the Night Prayer and sometimes offered thirteen Rak'ahs. Other times he (peace be upon him) offered less than that during Ramadan and at other times.

When the Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked about Night Prayer, he said: [\(Night Prayer is two Rak'ahs followed by two Rak'ahs \(and so on\), and when one of you fears the break of dawn \(Fajr Prayer\), let them offer a single Rak'ah to make the Salah they have offered Witr \(Prayer with an odd number of units\)\).](#)

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› (Agreed upon by Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not specify a certain number of Rak'ahs in Ramadan or at other times. For that reason, the Sahabah (may Allah be pleased with them) sometimes offered during the time of `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) thirty-three Rak'ahs and at other times eleven Rak'ahs. All that was authentically reported from `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) and by the Sahabah during his time.

Some Salaf (righteous predecessors) used to offer during Ramadan thirty-six Rak'ahs and then offer three Rak'ahs as Witr. Others used to offer forty-one Rak'ahs. This was reported about them by the Shaykh of Islam, Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy on him), and by other scholars. He also mentioned that this is an optional matter and indicated that it is better for those who lengthen the recitation, bowing and prostration to lessen the number of Rak'ahs, while those who lighten (shorten) the recitation, bowing and prostration to increase the number of Rak'ahs. This is the meaning of his statement (may Allah have mercy on him).

If we contemplate the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him), we will know that the best practice is to offer eleven Rak'ahs or thirteen Rak'ahs in Ramadan or at other times because this is what conforms to the practice of the Prophet (peace be upon him) at most times. This is more considerate of the people who are being led in prayer and more helpful in achieving tranquility and Khushu'. If any one wishes to offer more, there is no blame or Karahah (reprehensibility).

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It is preferable for those who offer supererogatory night Prayer in Ramadan not to leave the Masjid before the Imam leaves. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: [\(Anyone who prays Qiyam \(optional Night Prayer\) with the Imam until he finishes, it will be recorded for him as spending the whole night](#)

in prayer.)

Muslims are enjoined by Shari'ah (Islamic law) to do their best to worship Allah in this Holy Month by offering supererogatory prayer, reciting the Qur'an and contemplating it; glorify Allah as much as possible through Tasbih (saying: "Subhan Allah [Glory be to Allah]"), Tahlil (saying: "La ilaha illa Allah [There is no god except Allah]"), Tahmid (saying: "Al-hamdu lillah [All praise is due to Allah]"), Takbir (saying: "Allahu Akbar [Allah is the Greatest]"), Istighfar (seeking forgiveness from Allah), prescribed supplications, enjoying good and forbidding evil, calling people to Allah (Glorified and Exalted be He), consoling the poor and striving to please parents, maintaining ties of kinship, treating neighbors kindly, visiting the sick or other kinds deeds. As mentioned previously, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: (Allah looks at your competition in doing good therein, and boasts of you before His angels. So show Allah goodness from yourselves, for truly the wretched person is the one who is deprived of the Mercy of Allah during this month.) The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: (Whoever seeks to draw closer to Allah during it (the month of Ramadan) by doing some good deed will be like one who does a Faridah (obligatory act of worship) at any other time, and one who does a Faridah (during Ramadan) will be like one who does seventy Faridahs at any other time.)

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The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said: ('Umrah (performed) in Ramadan is equivalent to Hajj,' or he (peace be upon him) said, 'Hajj performed with me (in reward).')

There are many Hadiths and Athars (narrations from the Companions) that urge us to compete in performing all kinds of good deeds in this Holy Month.

Allah is the One to be asked for guiding us and all Muslims to what pleases Him. May Allah accept our Sawm, Qiyam, improve our condition and protect us from misleading trials. We also ask Allah (Glorified be He) to make Muslim leaders righteous and unite their word upon the right. Only He is able to do that. As-salamu 'alaykum warahmatullah wabarakatuh!

Source: Fatwas of Ibn Baz