

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DEVOTIONAL ACTS

#### The meaning of the term Saum

Literally **Saum** means controlling one's self from any forms of distractions. Technically, Saum is a term used to refer to fasting, which in Islam is an act of abstaining from eating, drinking, smoking, enjoying sexually pleasure and from all evils from dawn to dusk with a clearly defined intention during Ramadhan and specified optional days.

#### Indicators that shows that Earlier Ummah used to observe Saum

1. The Jews used to fast in the remembrance of the return of prophet Musa (AS) from Mount Sinai where he had gone to talk to Allah (SWT)
2. Prophets Musa and Issah used to fast for forty days and nights.
3. Prophet Daud (AS) used to fast on alternating days throughout his life.
4. When Prophet Muhammad migrated to Madina, he found the Jews engaging in fast on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharam to remember the day Allah saved Prophet Nuh (AS) with his ummah from the floods using the *Safina* (Ark).

#### Conditions of Saum

If the following conditions are fulfilled, one is obliged to fast:

- Every Muslim male and female
- One who is mentally fit and sane
- One who is physically fit and healthy
- One who has attained age of puberty (al-bulugh)
- One who is present at his or her home residence

#### Significance of Saum

There are a lot of benefits of fasting socially, morally, economically and even for the health of individuals among others in the community.

#### Social benefits of saum

1. It instills a sense of discipline through restraining oneself from all the evils. During fasting, a Muslim engages in Swalat and other acts of worship that prevents him from doing evil deeds.
2. It promotes brotherhood and unity. During this month Muslims perform most of the prayers together for example taraweh. They also share their meals during the Iftar and are encouraged to give sadaqa to the less fortunate.
3. It shields one from evil. During the day and the nights of the month of fasting, the acts of Ibadah are heavily rewarded by Allah (SWT). This encourages the Muslims to shun evil and keep practicing the good deeds.
4. The fasting experience helps a Muslim to control his or her desires thus contributing to emotional balance.
5. It prepares one to face hardships like famine as you are expected to abstain from foods and drinks while at the same time one is expected to perform the normal duties.
6. A Muslim gets rid of undesirable habits like backbiting, rumor mongering among others. We shall discuss some of these habits later on in this chapter.
7. Hunger teaches sympathy to the less fortunate in the society and therefore, promoting sharing of what one has.

### **Economic and Health benefits of fasting**

- It promotes good health because the excessive fat is burnt during fasting. Thus, reducing the risks of using money for treatments of different diseases such as heart attack, blood pressure and others.
- Saum improves eating habits by making individuals escape from unhealthy “munching” habits. Therefore, helps in curbing the effects of greediness and extravagance.
- Fasting promotes sound budgeting because it reduces the number of meals.
- Saum make people to empathize with less fortunate members of humanity who suffer from hunger due to poverty. Hence, promoting sharing among the members of the community.
- Fasting gives human digestive system some rest and therefore, makes it rejuvenated to work more effectively and efficiently.

## **Spiritual and Moral significance of fasting**

1. Allah (SWT) directly rewards fasting because He is the only one who knows the validity of the fast of a Muslim.
2. Fasting strengthens one's faith because throughout the fasting period, a Muslim engages in acts of worship that brings him closer to Allah (SWT).
3. It's a commandment from Allah (SWT) and the fourth pillar of Islam. Allah (SWT) is the one who prescribed fasting so that the Muslims may be able to worship and fear him.
4. It increases concentration in acts of worship, including Swalat. During fasting, a Muslim is required to increase the acts of Ibadah and the performance of good deeds.
5. It instills a source of loyalty and obedience to Allah (SWT)
6. Peace of mind and tranquility occurs during the entire month of fasting. Because, individuals feel to be closer to Allah.
7. Fasting teaches a person to acquire taqwa (piety) and self-esteem and self-discipline. Because of continuous performance of good deeds.
8. Fasting promotes patience and perseverance among people because people follow the commands of Allah even if they are difficult.

## **Types of Saum**

The following are various types of Saum:

### **1. Fardh (obligatory)**

This is the compulsory type of fast observed during the holy month of Ramadhan. Allah (SWT) has ordained fasting during this month for all Muslims who are sane, have attained puberty and are in good health. It is rewarded if performed and if deliberately neglected one gets a sin.

## **Occasions when fasting becomes compulsory**

Apart from the month of Ramadhan, fasting can become compulsory under the following occasions:

- When one misses out a day in Ramadhan and he or she is expected to perform Qadhaa saum.

- In case of kafara of breaking the fast intentionally in Ramadhan for example having sexual intercourse.
- In case one has to observe nadhir saum (a vowed fast)
- When a person has broken an oath, he or she has to observe a fast for three days.
- In case a person has killed a person unintentionally, he or she should fast for two months continuously.
- For breaking the rules of ihram for the pilgrim of tamattu who is unable to sacrifice an animal due to some difficulties, one should fast ten days.
- To expiate for dhihar, one should fast for two months continuously.

## **2. Sunnah (optional)**

These are the optional recommended fasts performed to follow the traditions of the Prophet. If one does not perform this fast, he does not get any sins. But if performed is rewarded.

### **Sunnah (optional) saum**

The following are Sunnah fasts according to Islamic Law:

- Fasting on Monday and Thursday of every week.
- Fasting on the 9<sup>th</sup> (*Taasua*) and 10<sup>th</sup> (*Ashura*) of the month of Muharam.
- Fasting during the first nine days of Dhul Hijja especially on Yaumul Arafat (9<sup>th</sup> of Dhul Hijja)
- Fasting the 'bright' days (*Ayamul Beidh*) of every lunar months of the Islamic calendar. These are 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> day.
- Fasting any six days of the month of Shawal. (*Sittatu sha'wal*)
- Fasting on alternative days as Nabii Daud

## **3. Nadhir (vow)**

*Nadhir* is an Arabic word which means to vow. Islam has made it mandatory for Muslims to fulfill the vows they make. These vows should be made on acts that are lawful. Therefore, nadhir saum is an obligatory fast that is observed when one takes an oath that states that if such and such a thing happen, I will have to fast a particular number of days.

## **4. Qadha (compensation)**

The term *Qadha* means to compensate or to pay up for a missed obligatory duty. In fasting, it refers to the compensation of the days one missed to fast during the month of Ramadhan for acceptable reasons.

## **5. Kafara (Expiation)**

It refers to the fast observed as a way of redeeming for some sins committed or an act of ibaadah omitted.

### **Events that can necessitate the observance of kafara fasts**

It is a must to perform Kaffara fast in the events of any of the following:

- a) If a husband likens his wife to his mother (Dhihar), he should fast for sixty consecutive days.
- b) If one performs sex during the day in the month of Ramadhan. Both the man and woman should observe saum for sixty or one day respectively.
- c) If one omits an integral part of Hajj and is not able to offer a sacrifice as Kaffara, then the person shall fast. This may include; shaving the hair, failing to spend three nights at Mina or failing to slaughter an animal.
- d) If a person breaks an oath or vow deliberately.
- e) If an individual happens to kill a person unintentionally.

### **Procedure of observing kafara saum (expiation fast)**

The following are the steps to be observed when one wants to observe a Kafara saum (expiation fast):

- a) One should take a light meal (Suhur) at night before the dawn.
- b) One should put the intention of performing the particular type of Kafara.
- c) One should observe fast with its prescribed rules before the break of dawn until dusk. For example, praying, abstaining from food and drinks as well as shunning away from all sorts of evils.
- d) One should break the fast at its prescribed time while following the optional methods of breaking the fast such as having dates and water.
- e) One should repeat the above procedure for the particular number of the days he or she is expected to fast, such as three days for breaking an oath, ten days for breaking the rules of hajj, two months for dhihar.

## **6. Nafl (Voluntary fast)**

These are optional fasts which one may voluntarily observe on any day except the forbidden days.

### **Forbidden days to fast**

These are the days when a Muslim is not allowed to observe fast unless it is the obligatory.

- a) The two days of 'idd: The day of Idd ul Fitr of breaking the fast of Ramadan and the day of idd ul Adha of great feast of sacrifice, Muslims should not fast.
- b) Ayyamul-tashreeq: During the three days following the 'Id al-Adha is not permissible to fast.
- c) To single out Friday as a day of fasting: Friday is a kind of weekly 'id for Muslims and, therefore, it is prohibited to fast on this day alone.
- d) Singling out Saturday or Sunday as a day of fasting so as to contradict the polytheists.
- e) Yaummul *Shakk* on the "day of doubt"
- f) Fasting on each and every day of the year since it is forbidden to fast on some of the days.
- g) Fasting consecutive days without eating at all [al-wisal]

### **Differences between fardh and sunnah saum**

The following are differences between obligatory and optional fasts:

- There is only one obligatory fast in the month of Ramadhan while the recommended optional fast are several
- Observance of the obligatory fast is done during the month of Ramadhan while sunnah fast are scattered throughout the other eleven months
- Faradh fast begins and ends with the sighting of the moon while sunnah fast has no specific days, one can fast in any month
- Avoiding obligatory fast without justifiable reason is blameworthy and sinful act while omitting of any sunnah fast attracts no sins nor punishment from Allah
- A muslims must compensate for missed faradh fast in form of fidya or Qadhaa while there is no fidya or Qadhaa for missed sunnah fast
- Fasting in Ramadhan lapses for either 29 Or 30 consecutive days whereas it is recommended to fast a day and break the other in sunnah fast

- The prescription of fardh fast is expressly mentioned in the Quran while the sunnah fasts are mentioned in the practice of the prophet
- In the obligatory saum tarawih is recommended while normal worship is recommended for sunnah fasts

### **Sunnah (Desirable) Acts in the Month of Ramadhan**

This refers to the acts that are pleasant, worthwhile and those that increase the rewards of fasting. They include;

1. Increasing the recitation of the Qur'an.
2. Breaking of fast with odd number of dates.
3. Sharing the food with other Muslims during the Iftar.
4. Breaking the fast immediately after sunset without delays.
5. Supplicating and making Duas and bringing Dhikr (glorifying Allah's name)
6. Performing itqaf during the nights of the last ten days of the month of Ramadhan.
7. To perform swalatu-taraweh and spent the nights while praying
8. Controlling one's eating habits.
9. To have suhur (a light meal before the break of dawn)
10. Indulging in daawa activities.

### **Exemption from Fasting**

Saum has been ordained to all Muslims. However, it has also provided exemptions for some categories of people which are either exempted entirely or temporarily.

### **People who are exempted from fasting but will repay later**

Those persons who are temporarily exempted from fasting include the following:

- a) Muslim travelers covering a distance of about fifty miles or more. However, it is recommended that they observe fast in case they will not encounter any extraordinary hardships.
- b) Children who have not attained the age of maturity. However, Muslim parents are advised to encourage them to fast for a few days

- c) Expectant Muslim women are exempted from fasting for fear of their state of health. This is so especially when their fasting will endanger both their lives and that of the child in the womb.
- d) Women who are nursing their children may temporarily break the fast. Especially when fasting is likely to endanger the life and health of their infants by depriving them breast milk or even affect their health.
- e) Women in their menstruation period (heidh) but not exceeding fifteen days should postpone the fast until when they are pure. Such women are not allowed to fast even if they are willing to do so.
- f) It is also recommended for those engaging in Jihad (Holy war)
- g) Women who are in their postnatal bleeding (Nifas) until when they are clean are not allowed to fast even if are willing to do so.
- h) A sick person who is expected to recover from his or her sickness.

### **People who are exempted from fasting entirely**

Those people who are entirely exempted from fasting include the following:

1. People who are permanently insane and are unaccountable for their deeds should not fast just like the way they have been exempted from performing other obligatory acts of worship.
2. Old and weak men and women who are cannot bear the hardship of fast. However, they should offer, one needy Muslim an average of one day's meal or its value. This compensation indicates that whenever they can fast even for one day of the month, they should do so, and compensate for the rest.
3. Persons with terminal illness and are on continuous medication and special care. These would include, people suffering from, severe cases of diabetes, HIV Aids, cancer among others ailments.
4. Muslim women who give birth every year since they will need energy to breastfeed and recover the lost blood during post birth bleeding.

### **Nullifiers of fasting**

Nullifiers of fasting refer to those conditions, circumstances or things that invalidate the saum, and may include the following:



1. Eating and drinking deliberately.
2. Post-natal bleeding occurs to a woman who has just given birth. Her Saum is nullified immediately.
3. Denouncing the Islamic faith while fasting.
4. Taking supplements and nutritional injections or drips.
5. Vomiting intentionally.
6. In the event that a Muslim woman receives her monthly bleeding (Heidh') then her fast is nullified.
7. Intentionally committing murder.
8. Ejaculation of sperms intentionally, that is from masturbation.
9. Making the intention to break the fast before the sunset.
10. Having sexual intercourse during the Day of fasting
11. Loosing of one's senses through fainting or becoming insane.
12. Inhaling snuff through the nostrils

### **Differences between the Islamic swaum and swaum of the people of other faiths**

The following are differences between the Islamic fast and fast of the people of other faiths:

<b>Islamic saum</b>	<b>Saum of other faith</b>
It involves the abstinence of all foods, drinks, sexual pleasures and all evils	It involves the abstinence from only certain food e.g meat.
There are different kinds of swaum such as fardh, sunnah, kaffara, Nadhir and Qadhaa.	All the fasts are alike and there are no categories of fasting.
Fasting can take place on anytime of the year except on the forbidden days and the fardh swaum which must be observed in the month of Ramadhan.	Fasting only take place on certain times of the year such as the Easter Mondays.
There are certain conditions to be fulfilled for one to fast such as being	Anybody can fast and there are no restrictions of observing purity.

Muslim, adult, sane, health, resident and free from heidh and Nifas	
It should take place in between the dawn and after the sunset	Some fast for long periods such as fasting for forty days and fasting daily.

### **Importance of the Month of Ramadhan**

The following are significance of the Month of Ramadhan to Muslims:

- a) This is the month in which the Qur'an was sent down from Lawhil Mahfudh to Baitul Izzah.
- b) It is the month in which Allah (SWT) has promised paradise for the performance of deeds.
- c) It is the month in which Allah (SWT) extends his blessings, forgiveness, mercy and those Muslims who follow his teachings are kept away from the fire.
- d) It is the month in which we find the Lailatul Qadr (the night of power) in which performance of Ibadah is better than 83 years. Allah also increases sustenance to those performing Ibadah during this night.
- e) In this month the Angels descent, among them Angel Jibril (AS) and they ask Allah (SWT)'s forgiveness for the Muslim Ummah.
- f) It is the month in which Allah (SWT) has ordained the special prayer of *Taraweh* which earns Muslims rewards.

- g) During this month, Satan is far removed and locked up, “his face is darkened.” This is to allow the believers to perform their Ibadah in peace.
- h) Muslim Ummah seek and receive forgiveness from Allah (SWT) for their sins and shortcomings.
- i) The doors of the Janna are open while Allah (SWT) closes those of Naar (fire).
- j) Fasting Ramadhan and Combining it with Sitta tu Shawwal (six days of shawwal) earns a Muslims the rewards of fasting for the entire year.
- k) It is a month in which the less fortunate among the people in the community get the benefits of Zakat and sadaqa since Allah (SWT) encourages the acts of charity.
- l) During this month, acts of worship are more acceptable and better rewarded by Allah (SWT).

## **Swatul-Taraweh**

### **Meaning of swalatul-Taraweh**

Tarawih: Tarawih is an optional prayer that follows Isha prayer, in that can be done only during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadhan. This prayer can be done alone, in a group, at home, or in a mosque or other public meeting area. The minimum number of raka'ah of Tarawih is eight with a maximum of twenty offered two by two units with a short break between each four units.

### **Benefits of performing Taraweh prayers in Ramadhan**

The following are the significance of performing tarawih prayers in the month of Ramadhan:

- a) It is counted as additional, special and optional prayer that only found in Ramadhan.
- b) It enables that Muslims to get more closer to Allah by engaging into different acts of ibada such as Dhikr, praying, sharing and I'tikaaf.
- c) Through the performance of tarawih prayers Muslims get rewards (thawab) from Allah.
- d) By performing tarawih makes Muslims to recite and listen to the Holy Quran throughout the night thus promoting its preservation.

- e) The performance of tarawih prayers keeps the Muslims away from evils and regulate their behaviours.
- f) It controls the Muslims from overeating since they learn to be patient while observing such a long prayer.
- g) It pleases the Angels while annoying the satan to see Muslims praying for the whole night.

## **Lailatul-Qadri**

### **Meaning of Lailatul-Qadr**

Lailatul-Qadr means the night of power. It is the blessed night which normally takes place in one of the odd number nights of the last ten nights of Ramadhan.

### **Islamic teachings about Lailatul-Qadr**

The following are the Islamic teachings on Lailatul-Qadr:

1. It takes place on the last ten nights of the month of Ramadhan.
2. It normally occurs on the one of the odd numbers of the last ten nights of Ramadhan.
3. It is the blessed night to the prophet by Angel Jibril.
4. The Quran was first revealed in full from lauhul-mahfudh to Baitul-Izza on that night.
5. The acts of worship such as prayers in that night are better than ibaadah of one thousand months.
6. Peace prevails throughout the night of power until the rise of the morning.
7. Muslims are encouraged to do more ibaadah in that night.
8. During this night, Angels descend to Earth with blessings of Allah until the break of dawn.

### **Importance of Lailatul-Qadri (Night of power)**

The following are some of the significance of Lailatul-Qadri to Muslims:

- Quran was revealed in full by Angel Jibril from lauhul-mahfudh (well-preserved table) to Baitul-izzah (lowest heaven) in this night of power.

- The night of power is better than one thousand months that which is equivalent to 83 years and 4 months.
- During this night, Angels descend to Earth with blessings of Allah until the break of dawn.
- Allah is having mercy to all His creatures during this blessed night and thus award them for any good deed done in this night as a reward of 1000 months.
- In this night there is internal peace and harmony in the world.

### **Things that Muslims should do after the sighting of the moon for the month of Ramadhan**

The following are recommended things to a Muslim to do after seeing the moon for the Month of Ramadhan:

- 1) Praying and reciting the Dua for seeing the moon for the commencement of Month of Ramadhan
- 2) A person should make intention of fasting the whole Month if Allah wills.
- 3) Praying swalatu-taraweh and spending the nights while praying and performing all the possible acts of ibaadah
- 4) Preparing and taking suhur in the late hours of the night
- 5) Abstaining from eating and drinking throughout the days of month of Ramadhan
- 6) Abstaining from all sorts of evils and instead striving to perform the righteous deeds.
- 7) Praying the five daily ordained prayers at their correct times without a failure
- 8) Avoiding sexual intercourse during the days of Ramadhan. However, it is permissible to have legit sexual intercourse during the nights.

### **How Muslims show concern to the poor from 1<sup>st</sup> of Ramadhan until iddul-fitr?**

The following are ways through which Muslims show concern to the poor from 1<sup>st</sup> of Ramadhan until iddul-fitr:

- a) By giving zakatul-fitr to the poor if due in the month of Ramadhan before going for idd prayers.
- b) By inviting the needy and destitute people for iftar (evening meals) whenever possible.

- c) By giving the poor people sadaqa in form of uncooked food when necessary.
- d) By taking some drinks and snacks to the mosques so that they can be used for breaking the fast.
- e) By donating them clothes to be worn during idd or even using them for prayers.
- f) By buying them some praying mats, mas-haf to some mosques dominated by poor society.