RAMADAN

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful; Peace and Blessings upon His Servant and His Messenger, forever. Amen.

Dear Muslims and Readers of Muhammad Speaks,

With Ramadan month being less than a month away, we offer to you this article on fasting.

Fasting is as popular today as it has been in the history of humanity. Today people are fasting for health reasons and for spiritual growth and experience. But it seems that people are more weight conscious today than they have ever been, and many are fasting to lose weight. In Islam, fasting has its own special meaning — a meaning that is natural in the religion. It is a meaning that is understood by religious people all over the world who truly practice divine worship.

Fasting in Islam is no new institution or new practice. With the following quotation from the Holy Quran, we can see that Prophet Muhammad, to whom the Quran was revealed, did not at any time claim to be offering any new fundamental teachings in religion to the religious world:

... يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ
كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ۝

HOLY QURAN translation by Yusuf Ali; Sura II, Verse 183

This verse clearly tells us that fasting was prescribed in other revealed books before the revelation of the Holy Quran to Prophet Muhammad of Arabia (upon whom be peace), and that fasting is no new institution for the religious world. The proper practice of fasting in religion has withstood many threats to take it over and to corrupt it.

Dualism has threatened the meaning of the fast in religion. Also it has been threatened by the belief that the carnal life should be punished. Today, in our time, it is somewhat threatened by vanity. People who are selfish and vain take up the fast only as a passing fad and they fast to present or to keep themselves physically attractive.

No dualism is in Islam. In Islam, creation is one, Creator is One, and that creation of the Creator is His wonderful works.

We do not fast to merely fight the enemies of the spiritual man. We fast to fight the enemies of the total man. We fast for Allah's pleasure. While fasting we are conscious of the need to appreciate and to respect both man and the outer world as creation of the Almighty God. Those who are to fast during the month of Ramadan are those Muslims who are physically able, who are adults, and who have sound minds.

Both male and female are to fast. However, during the period called the Menses, the women are exempt but they are to make up an equal number of missed days when the period is over. By this, the sister is able to continue her fast and complete 30 days of fasting.

Fasting is among the discipline practices in Islam. The entire month, day and night hours is given to the forceful self - discipline. The habit - formed life, that is called by us "daily routine," usually allows moral sleep and too much selfish indulgence.

Ramadan fast is enforced as a periodic adjustment in our lives for proper human balance. It follows the lunar calendar, coming this year (1975) in September on the ninth day. The book by Muhammad Hamidullah titled "Introduction to Islam" on page 59, section 173 reads:

"The fast extends over a whole month and, as is known, it is the purely lunar month that counts in Islam. The result is that the month of fasting (Ramadan) rotates turn by turn through all the seasons of the year (autumn, winter, spring and summer) and one gets accustomed to these privations in the burning heat of summer, as well as the chilling cold of winter."

I have quoted from Hamidullah on fasting because I find it very significant that Ramadan is regulated; that is, this calendar is regulated by the lunar phases. Islam is a universal religion and a religion recognizing Divine: that is the Divine plan and the Divine law working throughout the creation.

With the discipline of the inner body, Muslims read 1/30th of the Holy Quran each day so as to complete the Quran over this 30 day month fast period. Those who are unable to read should get with one who can read and repeat to oneself so that only the reader's voice is heard on a pleasing but moderate sound level, thus keeping the practice of Prophet Muhammad (on whom be peace).

Many Muslims complete the recitation with the prescribed daily prayers within the 30 day period. Such very outstanding reciters of the Holy Quran are rewarded the title "Hafis."

In the booklet by the Honorable Master Elijah Muhammad (May peace be upon Him) titled "Supreme Wisdom — Solutions to the So - called Negroes Problems," April 1, 1957 issue, The Honorable Elijah Muhammad said that Muslim prayer service is unequaled.

Study the Muslim's way of worship and you will agree with me that there is no better way of Divine worship. Why? For one thing, the Muslim always washes himself before communicating with Allah (God). In other words, he first cleans his own body and then invites the clean holy spirit to come into his body.

That is the best state of body, as well as of mind, in which to say one's prayer. We are forever grateful to Allah for the revolutionizing works and for the great wisdom of the Honorable Master Elijah Muhammad (may peace be upon Him).

Among the things to avoid during the fast period is the tendency to be spiritually idle or morally absent minded and the lazy tendency to miss daily prayers with no acceptable excuse. Also, avoid the self - righteous tendency and the self - enrichment spiritual efforts which overlook the crying needs sounding out in others near and distant. And avoid the desire to see God over the human need to emulate the Divine attributes as a worshipful and obedient slave (servant).

Brothers and Sisters, henceforth the Lost - Found Nation of Islam in America will be observing the month of Ramadan fast in the proper month and will be celebrating the victorious completion of this fast with our Muslim Brothers and Sisters the world over.

At this time I am asking you to fast on the day called Christmas Eve and to fast on the last day of the month of December. We will do this fast commemorating the great service to Islam all over the world given by the Honorable Master Elijah Muhammad (peace be on him).

Brothers and Sisters, you who followed the Honorable Master Elijah Muhammad and were with him for many years appreciated the gradual (and not abrupt) steps that he took in leading us into the proper practice of our religion (Islam). It was merciful and divine of him to ask us first to fast during the month of December, a month carrying short days. That is, a month carrying days which has daylight hours being shorter than in spring and particularly in summer months. These short day hours were easier on us.

It would have been more difficult for us if he had suddenly or abruptly taken us away from our former habits into the practice of fast as it is practiced all over the world. It would have been very difficult for many, who had just yesterday — before hearing the teachings, — been in the practice of eating three or more meals a day with no restraint upon their eating habits if they would have suddenly been brought into the month of Ramadan during the month of July or August.

So we accepted and appreciated from our late and great leader, the Honorable Master Elijah Muhammad, that he chose the month that would present the least difficulty to us as fasting Muslims. But more important was the effect that fasting in the month of December had in our lives to correct our thinking and take us from the habit of participating in a commercial holiday of the Christians called "Christmas."

As many of you know, among those things to abstain from during the daylight hours, of Ramadan are the taking of anything into the mouth such as food or drink; carnal or physical pleasures with wife or husband during the daylight hours; mental mastication, which responds to the above appetites. It is permissible to be with one's wife or husband during the night hours.

The fact that the entire month of Ramadan is a month of strenuous discipline should be constantly among our thoughts on God's pleasure, which serves to increase the growth and human excellence. Watch for the appearance of articles on fasting during the month of Ramadan by noteworthy scholars in the field of Islamic tradition.

185. Ramadhan is the (month)
In which was sent down
The Qur'an, as a Guide
To mankind, also clear (Signs)
For guidance and judgment
(Between right and wrong).
So every one of you
Who is present (at his home)
During that month
Should spend it in fasting,
But if any one is ill,
Or on a journey,
The prescribed period
(Should be made up)
By days later.
God intends every facility
For you: He does not want
To put you to difficulties.
(He wants you) to complete
The prescribed period,
And to glorify Him
In that He has guided you;
And perchance ye shall be
grateful.

... شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ
هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ
وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ ۚ
فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۖ
وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا
أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ
فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ
يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ
وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ
وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ
وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ
وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ۝

HOLY QURAN translation by Yusuf Ali; Sura II, Verse 185

Everyone of you who is present at your home during that month should spend it in fasting. But if anyone is ill or on a journey, the prescribed period should be made up later. God intends every facility for you. He does not want to put you through difficulty. He wants you to complete the prescribed period and to glorify Him in that He has guided you and, perchance, you shall be greatful.

Brothers and Sisters and Readers of this Muhammad Speaks column, we thank you for honoring us with your time to read this article on Ramadan fast.

We greet you with the greeting of peace, As-Salaam-Alaikum.

Your Brother,
W.D. Muhammad