

Voluntary fasts

The Prophet (SAW) has exhorted us to fast during the following days:

1. **Six days of the month of Shawwal.** Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari reported that the Prophet (SAW) said: “Whoever fasts during the month of Ramadhan and then follows it with six days of Shawwal will be rewarded as if he had fasted the entire year.” (Jamaah). According to Ahmad, one may fast on these days consecutively or non-consecutively as neither practice is preferred over the other.

2. **The first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah, especially the day of Arafah, for those who are not performing the pilgrimage.** Abu Qatadah reported that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: “Fasting on the day of Arafah is an expiation for two years, the year preceding it and the year following it...” (Jamaah).

3. **During the month of Muharram, especially the day of ‘Ashurah and the days immediately preceding and following it.** Abu Hurairah reported: “I asked the Prophet: ‘Which prayer is the best after the obligatory prayers?’ He said: ‘Prayer during the middle of the night.’ I asked: ‘Which fast is the best after the fast of Ramadhan?’ He said: ‘The month of Allah that you call Muharram.’” (Ahmad, Muslim and Abu Dawud)

4. **Most of the month of Sha’ban.** The Prophet (SAW) would fast most of the month of Sha’ban. ‘Aishah said: “I never saw the Messenger of Allah fast a complete month save for Ramadhan, and I have never seen him fast more in a month than he did in Sha’ban.” (Bukhari and Muslim).

5. **Mondays and Thursdays.** Abu Hurairah reported that the most the Prophet (SAW)

would fast would be Monday and Thursday. He was asked about that and he said: “*The actions are presented every Monday and Thursday. Allah forgives every Muslim or every believer, except for those who are boycotting each other. He says (about them): ‘Leave them.’*” (Ahmad). It is recorded in *Sahih Muslim* that the Prophet (SAW), when asked about fasting on Monday, said: “*That is the day on which I was born and the day on which I received revelations.*”

6. **Three days of every month.** Abu Dharr al-Ghifari reported: “*The Messenger of Allah ordered us to fast for three days of every month, that is, on the days of the full moon (the 13th, 14th and 15th of the lunar month). And he said: ‘It is like fasting the whole year.’*”

7. **On alternate days.** Abu Salamah ibn Abdurrahman reported from Abdullah ibn Amr that the Prophet (SAW) said to him: “I have been informed that you stay up in prayer during the night and fast during the day.” Abdullah answered: “Yes, O Messenger of Allah.” The Prophet said: “Fast and do not fast, pray and sleep, for your body, your wife and your guests have a right upon you. It is sufficient for you to fast three days a month.” Abdullah said: “I wanted to be stricter on myself.” And he said: “Then fast three days a week.” Abdullah said: “I have the strength to do more!” The Prophet said: “*Fast the fast of the Prophet David and do not do more than that!*” Abdullah inquired: “*And what was the fast of David?*” The Prophet replied: “*He would fast one day and then not fast the next.*” (Ahmad and others) Wallahu A’lam.

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