

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

# Submitters Perspective

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## Ramadan

### *Fasting Emphasized and Modified\**

[2:183] O you who believe, fasting is decreed for you, as it was decreed for those before you, that you may attain salvation.

\*2:183-187 Like all duties in Submission, fasting was decreed through Abraham (22:78, Appendices 9 & 15). Prior to revelation of the Quran, sexual intercourse was prohibited throughout the fasting period. This rule is modified in 2:187 to allow intercourse during the nights of Ramadan.

[2:184] Specific days (are designated for fasting); if one is ill or traveling, an equal number of other days may be substituted. Those who can fast, but with great difficulty, may substitute feeding one poor person for each day of breaking the fast. If one volunteers (more righteous works), it is better. But fasting is the best for you, if you only knew. [2:185] Ramadan is the month during which the Quran was revealed, providing guidance for the people, clear teachings, and the statute book. Those of you who witness this month shall fast therein. Those who are ill or traveling may substitute the same number of other days. GOD wishes for

you convenience, not hardship, that you may fulfill your obligations, and to glorify GOD for guiding you, and to express your appreciation.

[2:186] When My servants ask you about Me, I am always near. I answer their prayers when they pray to Me. The people shall respond to Me and believe in Me, in order to be guided. [2:187] Permitted for you is sexual intercourse with your wives during the nights of fasting. They are the keepers of your secrets, and you are the keepers of their secrets. GOD knew that you used to betray your souls, and He has redeemed you, and has pardoned you. Henceforth, you may have intercourse with them, seeking what GOD has permitted for you. You may eat and drink until the white thread of light becomes distinguishable from the dark thread of night at dawn. Then, you shall fast until sunset. Sexual intercourse is prohibited if you decide to retreat to the masjid (during the last ten days of Ramadan). These are GOD's laws; you shall not transgress them. GOD thus clarifies His revelations for the people, that they may attain salvation.

When you read the verses, one thing that

stands out is that it starts and ends with the reminder about "attaining salvation". In simple terms—that's what it's about. We made a huge mistake during the great feud (38:69). We hurt our souls and didn't take the choice the mountains and the stars and the birds took (33:72). So, now we have to make it back.

Salvation is being saved or protected from harm or being saved or delivered from a dire situation. In religion, salvation generally refers to the saving of the soul from sin and its consequences. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvation>

### **Ramadan 2021**

*God willing*

**Ramadan starts** April 13 for most of the world (some places in western USA and Canada may start April 12) .

The **Night of Destiny** (Night of Power) will start at the sunset of May 8 for places that begin fasting on April 13.

For more details (including dates for other places), please visit:

<https://masjiduntucson.org/Ramadan/>

(Continued on page 2)

*(Continued from page 1)*

It's God's grace that He gave us a beautiful world to prove ourselves in, where, praise God, we're not lacking for anything. And in some ways, it's a world that we choose. If we choose sin—our world is unhappy. If we choose to submit, to obey God, our world is happy. It's a continuous cycle that are little tastes of heaven or hell.

We know the minimum requirements for salvation are in 2:62 and 5:69: belief in God, belief in the Last Day, and leading a righteous life. And since we have the Quran, each of these is spelled out in more detail. Let's look at some verses that talk about attaining salvation.

*[2:21] O people, worship only your Lord—the One who created you and those before you—that you may be saved.*

*[92:17-21] Avoiding it will be the righteous. Who gives from his money to charity. Seeking nothing in return. Seeking only his Lord, the Most High. He will certainly attain salvation.*

*[4:95] Not equal are the sedentary among the believers who are not handicapped, and those who strive in the cause of GOD with their money and their lives. GOD exalts the strivers with their money and their lives above the sedentary. For both, GOD promises salvation, but GOD exalts the strivers over the sedentary with a great recompense.*

*[6:51] And preach with this (Quran) to those who reverence the summoning before their Lord—they have none beside Him as a Lord and Master, nor an intercessor—that they may attain salvation.*

These verses tell us: we need to worship God—that's why we were created. Charity and striving in the cause of God are emphasized. And we're told to follow whatever's in the Quran. Which ties in to why we should be seeking refuge in God when we read it (16:98). Because Satan will try his best for us to be heedless or

distracted or get the wrong meaning out of the verses. If you look, there are so many people out there who have read the Quran, even in their native language, yet find it too difficult. We pray that we never find the Quran too difficult and are able to read it every day.

And it is God's gift that He gives us opportunities, like Contact Prayers (*Salat*), obligatory charity (*Zakat*), fasting, etc. All religious duties are gifts for the soul. They help us remember God and appreciate God. We learn to give up this body's wants and needs and prioritize the soul. Getting up at dawn means giving up sleep and "forsaking the bed" to remember God. Giving to charity allows humans, with God's help, to tackle our natural stinginess and the love of money. And during fasting we give up food and drink and allow the "soul" to be the boss of the body with God's help. As we stay away from food for the body, fasting provides food for the soul. It nourishes the soul. We may not be eating, but our souls are eating and growing. Thank You, God.

If you like chocolate—think of fasting as treating your soul with the equivalent of chocolate all day long. Every time we think of God or consciously avoid food, it's like soul-chocolate! May God bless us with a good month that grows our soul.

And may God help us all be happy fulfilling the fast. Jesus reminded his followers not to be glum during fasting, but instead to be happy—seeking to please God alone (Matthew 6:16-18).

If we slip, we seek forgiveness and work a little harder. God doesn't want us to be miserable. He knows the human body and condition well. We can fast and be happy, kind, humble, patient and steadfast.

*2:185 "... GOD wishes for you convenience, not hardship, that you may fulfill your obligations, and to glorify GOD for guiding you, and to express your appreciation."*

## Ramadan

Ramadan 2021 is just around the corner (see box on page 1 for dates). We want to prepare ourselves for this wonderful month. It's a blessing from God that we have the ability to fast, and an even greater blessing that we know why we fast, what we're striving for.

*[2:183] O you who believe, fasting is decreed for you, as it was decreed for those before you, that you may attain salvation.*

God tells us that that awareness—awareness of the Hereafter, Salvation—is a great blessing *[38:46] We bestowed upon them a great blessing: awareness of the Hereafter.* Someone who goes through this life oblivious to the consequences after death has no chance to repent and reform. They're not even aware that they should. So, we have to be very thankful that God has shown us, taught us through the Quran and the messengers, that this life is an illusion and the only reality is in the Hereafter.

There are certain things we have to do in this life to deserve Paradise in the Hereafter. We have to worship God alone—no idols, no partners. We have to believe in the accountability of the Day of Judgment. We have to lead a righteous life, which God defines in 2:177 and which includes being charitable, kind and honest.

In order to achieve that level of belief, God has given us practices which help to focus our attention on God and grow our souls. One of those practices is fasting. It's not meant as a hardship, torture or deprivation. It's meant as a motivation. When we feel hungry during the day, we become appreciative of the provisions God has given us and more sympathetic toward those who have less. And we are very appreciative of the food we consume after sunset. When we feel thirst on long

Faiz

*(Continued on page 3)*

*(Continued from page 2)*

hot summer days, it makes us grateful for the water God has provided and the system of evaporation, rain and storage of the water in the earth.

In addition, we try to be more focused on God and His blessings, doing more commemoration, more imploring, more Quran reading. Perhaps we have more Quran studies to spend time with other submitters as God encourages us in 18:28. Maybe we take on a project, like reading the Quran all the way through or reading it in revelation order, reading the Psalms in the Bible, or writing an article or two—anything that puts our mind totally on God for large portions of the day.

The verses about Ramadan are 2:183-5 & 187. It's interesting to me that among those verses is 2:186. *When My servants ask you about Me, I am always near. I answer their prayers when they pray to Me. The people shall respond to Me and believe in Me, in order to be guided.*

That's why God decreed fasting for us, so we can be guided, so we can become more and more aware of the awesomeness of God. He is always near, never resting, never too busy to listen to our prayers. We have to have a strong, well-developed soul so that we can enjoy being in the presence of God in the Hereafter.

May God grant each of us a beautiful month of Ramadan, with blessings and joy and celebrations, and great growth of soul.

*Lydia*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Food for Thought

During Ramadan our minds invariably wander to thoughts about food. While we refrain from eating, it is acceptable to consider the verses in the Quran on this delectable topic.

From the tempting fruits of Eden to the etiquette reminders for eating with Muhammad, the Quran narrates examples

to learn from vicariously. Wondrous sustenance was granted to many in the past including the ghost town sleeper's unspoiled food, Mary's divine provisions and dates, Job's healing spring, Jonah's edible fruit tree, and the feast from the sky for Jesus' disciples. Many of these accounts underscore the fact that the prophets and messengers were only humans that ate and walked in the markets just like us. These individuals may also be contrasted with Abraham's angel guests who did not eat. From the pages of the Quran we are taught our stomachs may long for cucumbers, onions, and beans but it shouldn't be out of ungratefulness like the Children of Israel with the manna and quail. There are similar lessons in the account of the boastful gardener and his friend, Sheba's marvelous homeland and the sure harvesters. It must be our goal to thank God without fail for every morsel that He provides for our well being.

Provisions of the past were tied directly to crops, harvest, and springs, but God sends modern provisions through money, grocers and restaurants. However, it doesn't diminish the importance of being appreciative. One way of demonstrating appreciation for His support is to adhere to God's laws like giving "due alms on the day of harvest" or giving Zakat charity when we receive any provision of money. Those that observe Ramadan, acknowledge that God knows what is best for us. Allowing all the vast array of foods that God has deemed permissible shows recognition that He is the Most Gracious Provider, and that He imposes only a few limits on what to eat or drink in His scripture. Pronouncing God's name on anything before it is eaten expresses belief in Him and His revelations. While Ramadan is a test of steadfastness, we are told in the Quran that God may test steadfastness through loss of money or crops as well. God alone has the power to relieve this type of adversity.

God also offers proof of His abilities and existence through the food He provides. The variety of colorful, self-packaged fruits and vegetables confirms His great-

ness and today's shipping industry roaming the earth augmenting our choices, gives all the more reason not to take what God endows us with for granted. God tells us He is aware of the grain in the depths of the soil and He is the One who causes it to crack and germinate. He sends good weather to allow them to grow revealing His kindness and control. Out of His mercy, He has allowed a selection of livestock to be domesticated for our meals as well as fish and other meats. Humans cannot create a simple tree to feed themselves, yet God feeds and is not fed. Only God, the best Provider, could have planned such an amazing and pleasurable system of delivering nutrition and healing to His creation.

Other verses in the Quran use crops, gardens and fruits figuratively in order to give insight and understanding. Spending in God's cause, for instance, is compared to a grain producing many spikes as well as crops grown in fertile soil. Preoccupation with this worldly life is paralleled with a flourishing garden suddenly struck completely barren and useless. Many of these illustrative verses in the Quran are used in the allegorical descriptions of the Hereafter. No one would want to be like the occupants of Hell that are described as eating from trees of bitterness and drinking miserable drinks of sand. In contrast, the lucid passages about the lavish gardens and lush orchards of Heaven almost temporarily transport our yearning souls to the rivers of unpolluted water, fresh milk and honey that are reserved as a reward for the righteous.

God rewards the righteous from His inexhaustible bounties both in this life and in the Hereafter. Figs, olives, grapes, pomegranates and other foods mentioned in the Quran anchor its illuminating verses about God and all His splendor in the reality around us. As we find compassion for those that go hungry during Ramadan, we can also renew our appreciation of God and His innumerable blessings.

*[from Submitters Perspective Oct 2004]*

*Donna*

MASJID TUCSON United Submitters International

PO Box 43476 Tucson AZ 85733-3476 USA

Tel: (520) 323 7636

internet web site: [www.masjiduntucson.org](http://www.masjiduntucson.org)

e-mail: [info@masjiduntucson.org](mailto:info@masjiduntucson.org) (or: [masjiduntucson@gmail.com](mailto:masjiduntucson@gmail.com) )

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## “Fasting” in the: Old Testament

Isiah 58:1-11 “True Fasting”

- <sup>1</sup> “Shout it aloud, do not hold back.  
Raise your voice like a trumpet.  
Declare to my people their rebellion  
and to the descendants of Jacob their  
sins.
- <sup>2</sup> For day after day they seek me out;  
they seem eager to know my ways,  
as if they were a nation that does what is  
right  
and has not forsaken the commands of  
its God.  
They ask me for just decisions  
and seem eager for God to come near  
them.
- <sup>3</sup> ‘Why have we fasted,’ they say,  
‘and you have not seen it?  
Why have we humbled ourselves,  
and you have not noticed?’  
“Yet on the day of your fasting, you do  
as you please  
and exploit all your workers.
- <sup>4</sup> Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife,  
and in striking each other with wicked  
fists.  
You cannot fast as you do today  
and expect your voice to be heard on  
high.
- <sup>5</sup> Is this the kind of fast I have chosen,  
only a day for people to humble them-  
selves?  
Is it only for bowing one’s head like a  
reed  
and for lying in sackcloth and ashes?  
Is that what you call a fast,  
a day acceptable to the LORD?

<sup>6</sup> “Is not this the kind of fasting I have cho-  
sen:  
to loose the chains of injustice  
and untie the cords of the yoke,  
to set the oppressed free  
and break every yoke?”

<sup>7</sup> Is it not to share your food with the hun-  
gry  
and to provide the poor wanderer with  
shelter—  
when you see the naked, to clothe them,  
and not to turn away from your own  
flesh and blood?

<sup>8</sup> Then your light will break forth like the  
dawn,  
and your healing will quickly appear;  
then your righteousness will go before  
you,  
and the glory of the LORD will be your  
rear guard.

<sup>9</sup> Then you will call, and the LORD will  
answer;  
you will cry for help, and he will say:  
Here am I.  
“If you do away with the yoke of op-  
pression,  
with the pointing finger and malicious  
talk,

<sup>10</sup> and if you spend yourselves in behalf of  
the hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,  
then your light will rise in the darkness,  
and your night will become like the  
noonday.

<sup>11</sup> The LORD will guide you always;  
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-  
scorched land  
and will strengthen your frame.  
You will be like a well-watered garden,  
like a spring whose waters never fail.

## “Fasting” in the: New Testament

Matthew 6:1-18

“Be careful not to practice your righteous-  
ness in front of others to be seen by them.  
If you do, you will have no reward from  
your Father in heaven.

“So when you give to the needy, do not  
announce it with trumpets, as the hypo-  
crites do in the synagogues and on the  
streets, to be honored by others. Truly I  
tell you, they have received their reward in  
full. But when you give to the needy, do  
not let your left hand know what your right  
hand is doing, so that your giving may be  
in secret. Then your Father, who sees what  
is done in secret, will reward you.

“And when you pray, do not be like the  
hypocrites, for they love to pray standing  
in the synagogues and on the street cor-  
ners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you,  
they have received their reward in  
full. But when you pray, go into your  
room, close the door and pray to your  
Father, who is unseen. Then your Father,  
who sees what is done in secret, will re-  
ward you....

“When you fast, do not look somber as  
the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their  
faces to show others they are fasting. Tru-  
ly I tell you, they have received their re-  
ward in full. But when you fast, put oil on  
your head and wash your face, so that it  
will not be obvious to others that you are  
fasting, but only to your Father, who is  
unseen; and your Father, who sees what is  
done in secret, will reward you.