
In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

Ruling on *al-imsaak*

The article was collected by Ummu Mariam.

Verily, all praises and thanks are due to Allah, we praise Him, seek His help and His forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allah from the evils of our souls and evils of our deeds. One whom Allah guides none can lead him astray, and one whom He misguides, none can guide him. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad (SAAS) is His servant and His messenger.

"O you who believe! Fear Allah (by doing all that He has ordered and by abstaining from all that He has forbidden) ***as He should be feared.*** (Obey Him, be thankful to Him, and remember Him always), ***and die not except in a state of Islam*** [as Muslims (with complete submission to Allah)]." (*Al-Qur'aan* 3:102 - interpretation of the meaning)

"O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), ***and from him*** (Adam) ***He created his wife*** (Eve), ***and from them both He created many men and women and fear Allah through Whom you demand your mutual*** (rights), ***and*** (do not cut the relations of) ***the wombs*** (kinship). ***Surely, Allah is Ever an All-Watcher over you.***" (*Al-Qur'aan* 4:1 - interpretation of the meaning)

"O you who believe! Keep your duty to Allah and fear Him, and speak (always) ***the truth. He will direct you to do righteous good deeds and will forgive you your sins. And whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger*** (SAAS) ***he has indeed achieved a great achievement*** (i.e. he will be saved from the Hell-fire and made to enter Paradise)." (*Al-Qur'aan* 33:70-71 - interpretation of the meaning)

Ammaa ba'd (as for what follows), the best of speech is the speech of Allah that is the Book of Allah. The best of guidance is the guidance of Muhammad (SAAS). Of all matters, the worst are innovations; and everything new is an innovation, and every innovation is a deviation, and every deviation leads to Hell-fire.

Preface

As Ramadan is coming, Muslims around the world will welcome it by hastening to do lots of acts of worship. The month of Ramadan is the month of great gains and benefits. The smart trader is the one who makes the most of special occasions to increase his benefits.

It is worth pointing out that there is no specific supplication to be pronounced when starting to fast. "At-Tirmidhi narrated from Talhah ibn 'Ubaydillah (RAA) that when the Prophet (SAAS) saw the crescent moon, he (SAAS) would say, "*Allaahumma ahlilhu 'alaynaa bil-yumni wal-eemaan, was-salaamah wal-islam, Rabbi wa Rabbuka Allah (O Allah, make the crescent moon rise on us with blessing, faith, safety and Islam. My Lord and your Lord is Allah).*" (Classed as *sahiih* by al-Albaani in *Sahiih* at-Tirmidhi, 2745)

This *du'aa'* (supplication) is not just for the crescent moon of Ramadan, rather the Muslim should say it when he sees the crescent moon at the beginning of every month. With regard to saying supplication every day, there is no *du'aa'* that the Muslim should say when starting to fast each day. Rather he should simply have the intention that he is going to fast tomorrow.

The intention is subject to the condition that it be made at night, before the dawn comes, because the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*Whoever does not intend to fast before dawn, there is no fast for him.*" (Narrated by at-Tirmidhi, 730)

According to a version narrated by an-Nasaa'ee: "*Whoever does not intend to fast from the night before, there is no fast for him.*" (Classed as *hasan* by al-Albaani in *Sahiih* at-Tirmidhi, 573) What is meant is that whoever does not intend to fast and resolve to do so from the night before, his fast is not valid.

An-niyyah (the intention) is an action of the heart. The Muslim should resolve in his heart that he is going to fast tomorrow. It is not prescribed for him to utter it out loud and say, "I intend to fast" and other phrases that have been innovated by some people.

And Allah knows best." (Islam Q&A, *fatwaa* no. 37805)

From *sunan* (recommended acts) of fasting is breaking the fast (*al-iftaar*) immediately after it is confirmed that the sun has set and delaying *as-sahuur* (the meal taken before dawn with the intention of fasting) until the very last part of the night.

"*Verily that which separates (i.e. distinguishes) between our fast and the fasting of the people of the Book (i.e. Jews, Nazarenes and Christians) is the eating before dawn (as-sahuur).*" (Muslim)

"*Eat the meal of as-sahuur for verily in as-sahuur there are blessings.*" (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

"*My ummah (nation of followers, i.e. Muslims) will not cease being upon goodness as long as they hasten in breaking the fast and delay as-sahuur (pre-dawn meal).*" (Ahmad and it is authentic.)

"*The people will remain upon goodness as long as they hasten in breaking the fast.*" (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

The following *fataawaa* concerning *al-imsaak* (refraining, i.e. to refrain from those things that break the fast, such as eating, drinking and sexual intercourse) were taken from: www.islam-qa.com.

Question #66202:

What is the ruling on eating or drinking during *adhaan al-fajr* (the call for *al-fajr* prayer)? Because the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*If al-iqaamah for prayer is pronounced and the vessel is in the hand of any one of you, let him not put it down until he has finished with it.*"

Answer:

All praises and thanks are due to Allah.

Firstly: *Al-hadiith* mentioned in the question was not narrated in that wording. The wording of *al-hadiith* is: It was narrated that Abu Huraira (RAA) said: Allah's Messenger (SAAS) said: "*If one of you hears the call (to prayer) and the vessel is still in his hand, let him not put it down until he finished with it.*" (Narrated by Ahmad, 10251; Abu Dawud, 2350; classed as *sahiih* by al-Albaani in *Sahiih* Abi Dawud). We will discuss its meaning according to the scholars below.

Secondly: It is obligatory for the fasting person to refrain from things which break the fast from the true dawn (the appearance of a clear and distinct horizontal line of light on the eastern horizon) until the sun sets. What is meant is when dawn breaks, not *al-adhaan*. Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): "*...And eat and drink until the white thread (light) of dawn appears to you distinct from the black thread (darkness of night)...*" (*Al-Qur'aan* 2:187)

So when a person becomes certain that the true dawn has come, he has to stop eating and drinking, and if there is food in his mouth he has to spit it out; if he does not do that, then he has invalidated his fast.

But if a person is not certain that dawn has come, he may eat until he is certain. The same applies if he knows that *al-mu'adhdhin* (muezzin, a call-maker who pronounces *al-adhaan*) pronounces the call before the time comes, or if he is not sure whether he pronounces the call on time or ahead of time: he may eat until he is certain. But it is better for him to stop eating as soon as he hears *al-adhaan*.

With regard to *al-hadiith* mentioned above, the scholars interpreted it as referring to a muezzin who pronounces the call to prayer before dawn breaks.

An-Nawawi *rahimahullaah* said in *al-Majmuu'* 6/333: We have stated that if dawn breaks and a person has food in his mouth, he should spit it out and complete his fast. If he swallows it after knowing that dawn has come, his fast is invalidated. There is no difference of scholarly opinion on this point. The evidence for that is the *hadiith* of ibn 'Umar (RAA) and 'Aisha (RAA), according to which Allah's Messenger (SAAS) said: "*Bilal pronounces the call to prayer at night, so eat and drink until ibn Umm Maktuum pronounces the call to prayer.*" (Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim) There are many *ahaadiith* (narrations) in *as-Sahiih* with similar meanings.

With regard to the *hadiith* of Abu Huraira (RAA), according which the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*If one of you hears the call (to prayer) and the vessel is still in his hand, let him not put it down until he has finished with it*" – and according to another version it says: The muezzin used to pronounce the call to prayer when dawn broke – al-Haakim Abu 'Abdullah narrated the first version, and said: This is *sahiih* according to the conditions of Muslim. Both were narrated by al-Baihaqee, who said: If this is *sahiih*, it is understood by the majority of scholars as meaning that the Prophet (SAAS) knew that he used to pronounce the call to prayer before dawn came, thus the eating and drinking referred to were taking place just before dawn came.

The phrase "when dawn broke" is understood to be the words of someone other than Abu Huraira, or it may be describing the second *adhaan*, in which case the words of the Prophet (SAAS) – "*If one of you hears the call (to prayer) and the vessel is still in his hand*" – refer to the first call to prayer, so that it is in accordance with the *hadiith* of ibn 'Umar (RAA) and 'Aisha (RAA). He said: Thus the reports are in agreement. And Allah is the Source of strength, and Allah knows best. End quote.

Ibn al-Qayyim *rahimahullaah* stated in *Tahdhiib as-Sunan* that some of *as-Salaf* followed the apparent meaning of *al-hadiith* mentioned in the question, and they regarded it as permissible to eat and drink after hearing *adhaan al-fajr*. Then he said: But the majority are of the view that *as-sahuur* should stop when dawn breaks. This is the view of the four imams, and the majority of *fuqahaa'* (learned men who can give religious verdicts) of the regions, and was also narrated from 'Umar (RAA) and ibn 'Abbaas (RAA). The former quoted as evidence the words of the Prophet (SAAS), "...*So eat and drink until ibn Umm Maktuum pronounces the call to prayer, for he does not pronounce the call until dawn breaks.*" It is narrated thus in *Sahiih al-Bukhari*; in some versions it says: "...And he was a blind man who did not pronounce the call to prayer until it was said to him: Dawn has come, dawn has come." And the majority quoted as evidence the words of Allah, the Exalted (interpretation of the meaning): "...***And eat and drink until the white thread (light) of dawn appears to you distinct from the black thread (darkness of night)...***" (*Al-Qur'aan* 2:187), and the words of the Prophet (SAAS), "*Eat and drink until ibn Umm Maktuum pronounces the call to prayer,*" and his (SAAS) words, "*There are two dawns. The first one (the false dawn) does not make it haraam (prohibited) to eat or make it permissible to pray, but the second (the true dawn) makes it haraam to eat and permissible to pray.*" (Narrated by al-Baihaqee in his *Sunan*)

Reports were narrated from some of *as-Salaf* which indicate that it is permissible for a fasting person to eat until dawn breaks. Ibn Hazm *rahimahullaah* narrated a large number of such reports, including the report that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (RAA) used to say: "If two men are uncertain about dawn let them eat until they are certain."

It was narrated that ibn 'Abbaas (RAA) said: "Allah has permitted drinking so long as you are uncertain (about the dawn)..."

It was narrated that Makhuul said: I saw ibn 'Umar take a bucket of Zamzam water and say to two men, "Has dawn come?" One of them said: "It has come," and the other said, "No (it hasn't)," so ibn 'Umar drank (the water).

Ibn Hazm *rahimahullaah* said, commenting on *al-hadiith* asked about here and a number of similar reports: All of this refers to cases when they are not yet certain that dawn has come. Thus the narrations are in accordance with the Koran. End quote from *al-Muhallaa*, 4/367.

Undoubtedly most of the muezzins nowadays rely on clocks and timetables, not on sighting the dawn. This cannot be regarded as certainty that dawn has come. Whoever eats in this case, his fast is valid, because he was not certain that dawn had come, but it is better and safer to stop eating.

Sheikh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz *rahimahullaah* was asked: What is the ruling on the fast of one who hears *adhaan al-fajr* but continues eating and drinking?

He replied: What the believer must do is to abstain from things that break the fast, eating and drinking etc., when it becomes clear to him that dawn has broken, if the fast is an obligatory one such as in Ramadan and fasts in fulfilment of vows or as an act of expiation, because Allah, the Exalted, says

(interpretation of the meaning): "...**And eat and drink until the white thread** (light) **of dawn appears to you distinct from the black thread** (darkness of night)..." (Al-Qur'aan 2:187)

If he hears *al-adhaan* and knows that this is the call for *al-fajr* prayer, he must stop eating. If the muezzin pronounces the call to prayer before dawn breaks, then he does not have to stop eating, and it is permissible for him to eat and drink until it is clear to him that dawn has come.

If he does not know whether the muezzin pronounces the call to prayer before or after dawn, then it is better and safer for him to stop eating when he hears *al-adhaan*, but it does not matter if he drinks or eats something during *al-adhaan* because he does not know whether dawn has broken.

It is well known that those who live in cities where there are electrical lights cannot know whether dawn has come at the time when it breaks, but they can follow *al-adhaan* and timetables which give the time of dawn, hour and minute, in accordance with the words of the Prophet (SAAS): "*Leave that which makes you doubt for that which does not make you doubt.*" And he (SAAS) said: "*Whoever avoids doubtful matters will have protected his religious commitment and honour.*" And Allah is the Source of strength. End quote, from *Fataawaa Ramadan*, compiled by Ashraf 'Abd al-Maqsood, p. 201

Sheikh ibn 'Utheimeen *rahimahullaah* was asked: You said that we must stop eating when we hear *al-adhaan*, but a few years ago they did not stop eating until the end of *al-adhaan*. What is the ruling on that action of theirs?

He replied: The *adhaan* for *al-fajr* prayer may be pronounced either after dawn breaks or before. If it is pronounced after dawn breaks, then one must stop eating as soon as he hears the call, because the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*Bilal pronounces the call to prayer at night, so eat and drink until ibn Umm Maktuum pronounces the call to prayer, for he does not pronounce the call until dawn has broken.*" If you know that this muezzin does not pronounce the call to prayer until dawn has broken, then stop as soon as you hear him. But if the muezzin pronounces the call based on a timetable he follows, or based on his watch, then the matter is less serious.

Based on this, we say to this questioner: You do not have to make up what is past, because you were not certain whether you ate after dawn had broken. But in the future you should be careful; when you hear the muezzin, stop eating. End quote from *Fataawaa Ramadan*, p. 204

And the Sheikh (ibn 'Utheimeen) said, pointing out what is said about timetables being inaccurate: Because some people nowadays are uncertain about the timetables that people have, and they say that they give the time of dawn too early, (they said:) we went out into the desert with no lights around us, and we saw that the dawn came later (then mentioned in the timetable), and some people exaggerated and suggested that the dawn comes twenty minutes later.

But it seems that this exaggeration is not correct. What we think is that the timetables that people have nowadays give the time of dawn in particular as five minutes early, so if you eat whilst the muezzin is pronouncing *al-adhaan* according to the timetable, it doesn't matter. Some muezzins, may Allah reward them with good, pronounce *al-adhaan* five minutes later than the time given in the timetables as they exist at present, as a precaution, but some ignorant muezzins pronounce *adhaan al-fajr* early, claiming that this is on the safe side with regard to the fast, but they forget that they are being careless with regard to something that is more important than the fast, namely *al-fajr* prayer. So people may end up praying ahead of time based on their *adhaan*. If a person offers a prayer ahead of its time, even if he says the

opening *takbeer*, his prayer is not valid... (From *Majmuu' Fataawaa* Sheikh ibn 'Utheimeen *rahimahullaah*, vol 19, question no. 772)

And Allah knows best.

Question #12602:

In some countries there is a time approximately ten minutes before *al-fajr* which they say is the time of *al-imsaak*, when the people usually start fasting and stop eating and drinking. Is what they do correct?

Answer:

All praises and thanks are due to Allah.

What they do is not correct, because Allah has permitted the fasting person to eat and drink until dawn comes. Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): **"...And eat and drink until the white thread (light) of dawn appears to you distinct from the black thread (darkness of night)..."** (*Al-Qur'aan* 2:187)

Al-Bukhari and Muslim narrated from ibn 'Umar (RAA) and 'Aisha (RAA) that Bilal (RAA) used to pronounce *al-adhaan* at night. Allah's Messenger (SAAS) said: *"Eat and drink until ibn Umm Maktuum pronounces al-adhaan, for he does not pronounce al-adhaan until dawn comes."*

Al-Nawawi *rahimahullaah* said: This shows that it is permissible to eat, drink, have intercourse etc. until dawn comes.

Al-Haafidh ibn Hajar *rahimahullaah* said in *Fath al-Baari* (4/199): One of the reprehensible innovations that have appeared in our times is pronouncing the second *adhaan* approximately twenty minutes before *al-fajr* in Ramadan, and extinguishing the lamps which indicate that it is *haraam* to eat and drink for those who want to fast. Those who introduced this innovation claim that they do it on the side of caution with regard to an act of worship.

Sheikh ibn 'Utheimeen *rahimahullaah* was asked about some timetables which give the time of *al-imsaak* as being approximately one-quarter of an hour before *al-fajr*. He said: This is a kind of *bid'ah* (innovation) which has no basis in the *Sunnah*. Rather the *Sunnah* is to do the opposite, because Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): **"...And eat and drink until the white thread (light) of dawn appears to you distinct from the black thread (darkness of night)..."** (*Al-Qur'aan* 2:187)

And the Prophet (SAAS) said: *"Bilal pronounces al-adhaan at night, so eat and drink until you hear the adhaan of ibn Umm Maktuum, for he does not pronounce al-adhaan until dawn comes."* This *imsaak* which some of the people do is an addition to that which Allah has enjoined, so it is false. It is a kind of extremism in religion, and the Prophet (SAAS) said: *"Those who go to extremes are doomed, those who go to extremes are doomed, those who go to extremes are doomed."* (Narrated by Muslim, 2670)

And Allah knows best.

Question #38068:

In reference to question 12602, where you stated that stopping eating about 5 minutes before *al-fajr* (when fasting) is a form of *bid'ah*. I found the following *hadiith* in *Sahiih al-Bukhari*: Narrated Anas: Zaid ibn Thabit said: "We took *as-sahuur* with the Prophet (SAAS). Then he stood for prayer." I asked, "What was the interval between *as-sahuur* and *al-adhaan*?" He replied "The interval was sufficient to recite fifty verses of the Koran." Chapter 13, 3:144. Reciting 50 verses should take about 5 or 10 minutes, even more. So how is it a *bid'ah* to stop eating 5 minutes before *al-fajr*?

Answer:

All praises and thanks are due to Allah.

Al-Bukhari narrated from Anas (RAA) that Zaid ibn Thabit (RAA) said: "We ate *as-sahuur* with the Prophet (SAAS), then he stood up to pray." I [Anas] said: "How long was there between *al-adhaan* and *as-sahuur*?" He said: "As long as it takes to recite fifty verses."

This *hadiith* indicates that the Prophet (SAAS) used to eat *as-sahuur* this amount of time before *al-adhaan*, not that the Prophet (SAAS) started to fast and stopped eating and drinking this amount of time before *al-fajr*. There is a difference between the time of *as-sahuur* and the time of stopping eating and drinking. This is clear, all praises and thanks are due to Allah. It is like saying, "I ate *as-sahuur* two hours before *al-fajr*." This does not mean that you started fasting from that time, rather you are simply stating what time you ate *as-sahuur*.

What may be understood from the *hadiith* of Zaid ibn Thabit (RAA) is that it is *mustahabb* (recommended) to delay *as-sahuur* and it is not *mustahabb* to stop eating and drinking a while before *al-fajr*.

Allah has permitted those who intend to fast to eat and drink until they are certain that dawn has come. Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): **"...And eat and drink until the white thread (light) of dawn appears to you distinct from the black thread (darkness of night), then complete your saum (fast) till the nightfall..."** (*Al-Qur'aan* 2:187)

So it is permissible to have intercourse, eat and drink during the nights of Ramadan from the beginning of the night until dawn comes, then we are commanded to complete the fast until night comes. (Abu Bakr al-Jassaas in *Ahkaam al-Qur'aan*, 1/265)

Al-Bukhari and Muslim narrated from 'Aisha (RAA) that Bilal used to pronounce *al-adhaan* at night, and Allah's Messenger (SAAS) said: **"Eat and drink until Ibn Umm Maktuum pronounces *al-adhaan*, for he does not pronounce *al-adhaan* until the dawn comes."**

An-Nawawi *rahimahullaah* said in *al-Majmuu'* (6/406): Our companions and other scholars are agreed that *as-sahuur* is *sunnah*, and that delaying it is preferable. The evidence for all of that is *al-ahaadiith as-sahiihah* (the authentic narrations). And because *as-sahuur* and delaying it helps one to fast, and they involve being different to *al-kuffaar*. Moreover the time for fasting is the day, so there is no sense in delaying *al-iftaar* or refraining from eating *as-sahuur* at the end of the night.

The Standing Committee was asked (10/284): I read in some *tafaasiir* (explanations of the Koran) that the fasting person should stop eating and drinking 20 minutes before *adhaan al-fajr*, and this is described

as being on the safe side. How much time should there be between stopping eating and drinking and *adhaan al-fajr* in Ramadan? What is the ruling on one who hears the muezzin saying "*as-salaatu khayrun minan-naum* (prayer is better than sleep)" and he still drinks so long as *al-adhaan* is still going on. Is this correct?

They replied: The basic principle regarding when the fasting person should stop eating and drinking and should break the fast is the verse in which Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): **"...And eat and drink until the white thread (light) of dawn appears to you distinct from the black thread (darkness of night), then complete your saum (fast) till the nightfall..."** (*Al-Qur'aan* 2:187)

It is permissible to eat and drink until the dawn appears, which is the white thread of light that Allah has made the latest time when it is permissible to eat and drink. When the second dawn appears, it is *haraam* to eat and drink and do other things that break the fast. Whoever drinks whilst hearing *al-adhaan* for *al-fajr*, if *al-adhaan* comes after the second dawn, then he has to make up that day, but if that was before dawn, then he does not have to make it up.

Sheikh ibn Baaz *rahimahullaah* was asked about making the time for stopping eating and drinking approximately fifteen minutes before *al-fajr*. He replied: I do not know of any basis for this, rather what is indicated by the Koran and *Sunnah* is that we should stop eating and drinking when dawn comes, because Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): **"...And eat and drink until the white thread (light) of dawn appears to you distinct from the black thread (darkness of night), then complete your saum (fast) till the nightfall..."** (*Al-Qur'aan* 2:187)

And the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*Dawn is of two types, a dawn when it becomes haraam to eat and permissible to pray, and a dawn when it becomes haraam to pray (i.e., as-sobh prayer) and it is permissible to eat.*" (Narrated by ibn Khuzaymah and al-Haakim, who classed it as *sahiih* in *Buluugh al-Maraam*)

And the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*Bilal pronounces al-adhaan at night, so eat and drink until ibn Umm Maktuum pronounces the call to prayer.*" The narrator said: Ibn Umm Maktuum was a blind man who did not pronounce the call to prayer until someone said to him, 'Morning has come, morning has come.'" (*Sahiih* – agreed upon.)

Majmuu' Fataawaa ibn Baaz, 15/281.

Finally, we ask Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, to bless us all with sincere repentance, expiate our sins, give us strength and bless us with *at-taqwaa* (piety).

May Allah, the Exalted, send blessings upon our Prophet Muhammad and his family and companions.

References

- 1) *Al-fataawaa* were taken from: www.islam-qa.com
- 2) *Minhaj al-Muslim* by Abu Bakr Jabir al-Jaza'iry

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Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): ***"...Help you one another in al-birr and at-taqwaa (virtue, righteousness and piety); but do not help one another in sin and transgression. And fear Allah. Verily, Allah is Severe in punishment."*** (Al-Qur'aan 5:2)

Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): ***"By al-'asr (the time). Verily, man is in loss, except those who believe and do righteous good deeds, and recommend one another to the truth, and recommend one another to patience."*** (Al-Qur'aan 103)

On the authority of Abu Huraira (RAA) who reported that Allah's Messenger (SAAS) said: *"If anyone calls others to follow right guidance, his reward will be equivalent to those who follow him (in righteousness) without their reward being diminished in any respect, and if anyone invites others to follow error, the sin, will be equivalent to that of the people who follow him (in sinfulness) without their sins being diminished in any respect."* (Muslim)

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr (RAA) narrated that the Prophet (SAAS) said: *"Convey (my teachings) to the people even if it were a single sentence, and tell others the stories of the children of Israel (which have been taught to you), for it is not sinful to do so. And whoever tells a lie on me intentionally, will surely take his place in the (Hell) Fire."* (Al-Bukhari)

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