

Abu Hurayrah narrated that God's Messenger (peace be upon him) said:

- 1 God, Mighty and Exalted, said: 'All man's actions are his except fasting: it is Mine and I reward it'.
- 2 Fasting is a shield.
- 3 If any of you is fasting, he must neither say what is obscene nor shout. If someone abuses him verbally or quarrels with him, he should say: 'I am a fasting person'.
- 4 By Him who holds Muhammad's soul in His hand, the changing mouth smell of a fasting person is sweeter in God's view, on the Day of Resurrection, than the smell of musk.
- 5 A fasting person has two occasions to rejoice: when he ends his fast he rejoices at having completed his fast, and when he meets his Lord, he rejoices at having fasted.⁽¹⁾

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 1904; Muslim, 1151.

From the Qur'an

- ﴿Believers, fasting is decreed for you as it was decreed for those before you, so that you may be God-fearing.﴾ (2: 183)
- ﴿Say: 'In God's bounty and grace, in this let them rejoice; for this is better than all that they may amass'.﴾ (10: 58)
- ﴿Those who are patient in adversity will be given their reward in full, beyond reckoning'.﴾ (39: 10)

The Narrator

'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Ṣakhr al-Dawsī al-Azdī of Yemen was better known by his appellation, Abu Hurayrah. This is what is best known about his name and his father's name. He embraced Islam in the year in which the Battle of Khaybar took place, i.e. Year 7 of the Hijri calendar. He remained close to the Prophet, eager to learn, and he accompanied the Prophet wherever he went. He was one of the best memorizers of the Prophet's companions and the one who narrated the largest number of hadiths. Al-Bukhari mentioned that more than eight hundred companions of the Prophet or those who belonged to the *tābi'īn* generation narrated hadiths from him. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb appointed him as Governor of Bahrain. Later he returned to Madinah and devoted his time to narrating the Prophet's hadiths and educating people about their faith. He died in Year 58 AH, 678 CE.

Summary

The Prophet (peace be upon him) mentions some of the merits of fasting. One of these is that God assumes rewarding it without telling anyone what reward He gives for it. Another is that fasting is a shield protecting a person from indulging in sin. The mouth smell of a fasting person is fine in God's estimation, even though people may find it different. The Prophet also states that a person who attends to the worship of fasting will rejoice on the Day of Judgement when he sees the reward God has prepared for His fasting servants, and he is pleased in this life that God has enabled him to fast.



Message and Meaning



The Prophet (peace be upon him) mentions that God, Mighty and Exalted, said: 'All man's actions are his except fasting: it is Mine and I reward it'. The fact is that all acts of worship belong to God, but in this hadith God gives special mention to fasting as belonging to Him. This is to enhance the status of fasting giving it specific honour. It is the same as calling the Grand Mosque in Makkah 'God's House', or calling the she-camel which was the miracle given to Prophet Şālih 'God's she-camel'. (91: 13)

Fasting is given this special status because it is the one act of worship that is totally free of hypocrisy. It is the one act of worship that is possible to be totally hidden from angels and humans. Moreover, it involves physical hardship, humility and endurance of hunger and thirst. It also combines all types of perseverance not only in terms of accomplishing this worship, but also in resisting temptation and sin as fasting stops man from indulging in all manner of sin.

Hence, God has kept the reward for fasting a secret known only to Himself. He has informed the recording angels of the details of reward for prayer and zakat. However, He has not informed them of the reward for fasting, so that He will administer it Himself on the Day of Judgement.



The Prophet (peace be upon him) then tells us that fasting is a protective shield. It keeps a person away from the Fire on the Day of Judgement. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Whenever a servant of God fasts a day when he is on God's cause, God will, in return for that day set his face seventy autumns away from the Fire'.⁽¹⁾

Fasting is also a shield keeping a Muslim away from sin and disobedience of God, as it serves as a restraint, weakening temptation and sexual desire. Hence the Prophet (peace be upon him) says: 'Young people, whoever of you can meet marriage requirements, should get married. For marriage helps to lower one's gaze and maintain chastity. Whoever cannot, may resort to fasting, and it will be of help'.⁽²⁾



Given fasting protects a person from Hell and keeps him away from sin that takes him closer to it, the Prophet points out what a fasting person must avoid, such as intercourse and foreplay, vulgar speech and quarrels, etc. If someone abuses him verbally or seeks to quarrel with him, he should only say: 'I am a fasting person'. He first says this to himself so that he will not attempt what is not permissible for a fasting person. He also says it clearly to his opponent so that the other knows that he is refraining from returning his abuse because he is fasting. Otherwise, he would be more than a match for him. This may be enough to restrain an opponent, as he will realize that the man's silence is not a sign of weakness. Moreover, the other person may also be fasting, and this remark reminds him of his fasting and what is not permissible during this time

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 2840; Muslim, 1153.

2 Related by al-Bukhari, 5065; Muslim, 1400.

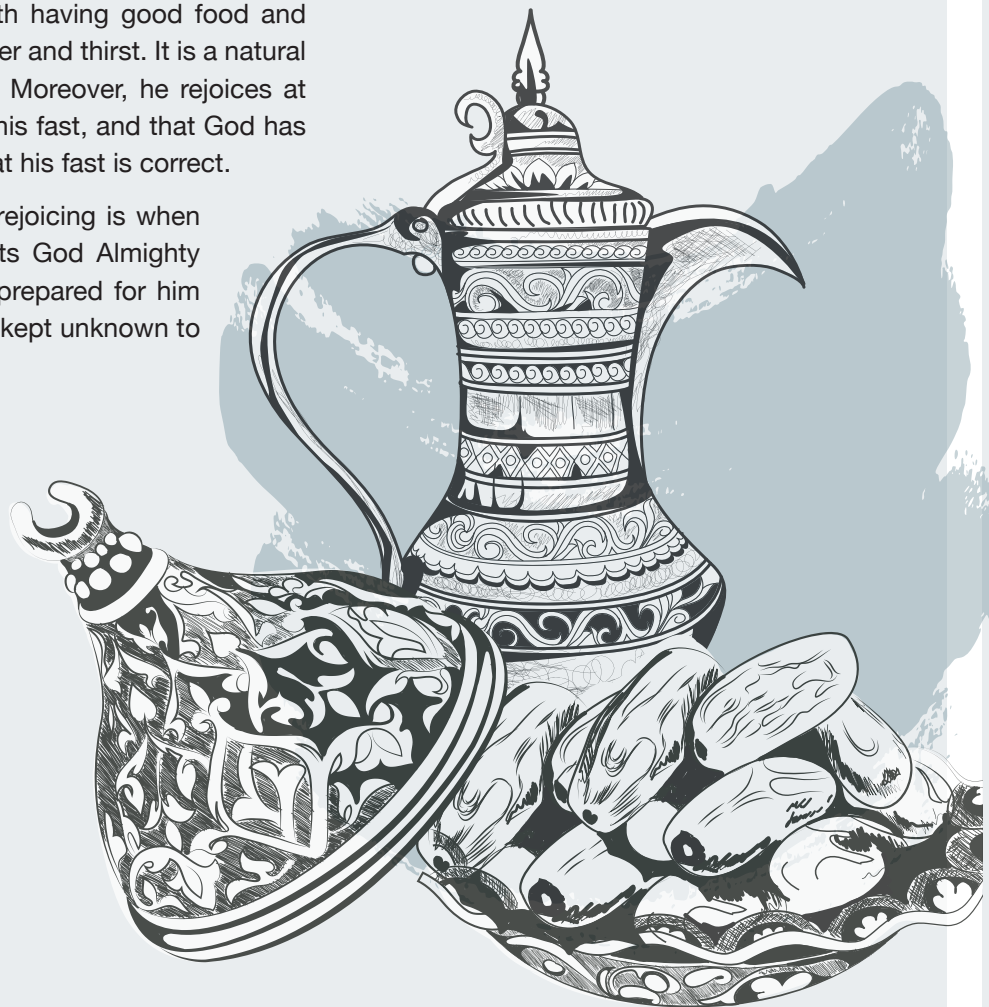


The Prophet, who always said the truth and never deviated from it, swears by God, that the mouth smell of a fasting person is in God's sight better than the smell of musk. Fasting causes a change to a person's mouth smell, making it unpleasant. However, it is acceptable to God and draws the fasting person closer to Him. He rewards His servant giving him on the Day of Judgement a fine smell which is better than the best we have in our world. This is the same as God rewarding a martyr by giving his blood the smell of musk. In our present life, God rewards a person for applying musk or perfume when attending Friday, congregational or Eid prayers. However, a fasting person is compensated for his changing mouth smell by a reward greater than that given to the one applying musk when attending congregational prayers.



The Prophet (peace be upon him) then tells us that a fasting person has two occasions to rejoice. The first is when he breaks his fast at the end of the day. He is delighted with having good food and drink after a day of hunger and thirst. It is a natural and permissible feeling. Moreover, he rejoices at being able to complete his fast, and that God has helped him to ensure that his fast is correct.

The other occasion for rejoicing is when the fasting person meets God Almighty and sees what He has prepared for him of reward that has been kept unknown to any of His creation.



Implementation

1

God has given fasting a special kind of merit as He kept it for Himself, with its exceptionally rich reward unknown to anyone else. Hence, every Muslim should make the best use of this and fast voluntarily as often as he can.

2

It is a great merit that God has given to fasting, making it His own. A Muslim cannot do much better than making the most of this honour by increasing his voluntary fasting in addition to obligatory fasting.

3

Fasting provides a protective shield from Satan and his temptations. Therefore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) highlights this aspect for young people who cannot afford to get married. He tells them that fasting helps in resisting temptation.

4

Fasting protects the worshipper from the Fire which is fuelled by humans and stones. God states that 'whoever is drawn away from the Fire and brought into paradise gains a great triumph'. (3: 185)

5

The Prophet (peace be upon him) states that a fasting person must not get involved in verbal abuse or quarrels. Such matters are not permissible to anyone, but the Prophet's order emphasizes the status of a fasting person, making it clear that he must not degrade himself by being involved in such matters.



6

It is permissible for a person to speak about some aspects of his worship, if this is intended to achieve something good or to repel what is bad or foul, involving no element of pretence and hypocrisy. Therefore, it is permissible for a fasting person who finds himself at the receiving end of verbal abuse to say to the other party that he is fasting.

7

The Prophet, who always says the truth, confirmed his statement adding an oath by God. Sometimes it is suitable for an advocate of Islam or an educator to do the same, but not frequently.

8

If a fasting person is inconvenienced by the change of his mouth smell, he should remember that such a foul smell is considered good by God, and that he himself gains a reward for it.

9

The hadith does not imply any discouragement of using a toothstick during fasting. The changed smell emanates from the stomach, not the mouth. Moreover, the hadith does not order a fasting person to leave that smell without trying to change it. It only reassures the fasting person.

10

The hadith implies that rejoicing at the end of the fasting day, and that one is now able to eat and drink, is neither reprehensible nor forbidden. It is a natural and permissible feeling, because it is an aspect of human nature to be delighted with food and drink.

11

Rejoicing at having food and drink after a fasting day is permissible. However, man's rejoicing at having received God's help to complete his fast is an act of thanking God for His blessings and favours. This, in itself, is an act of worship that earns a reward.

