

Abu Hurayrah narrated



that God's Messenger (peace be upon him) said: If one will not abandon saying and acting on what is false and wrong deeds, God is in no need of him abandoning his food and drink. ⁽¹⁾

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)
- ﴿Turn away, then, from the loathsome evil of idolatrous beliefs and practices; and turn away from every word that is untrue.﴾ (22: 30)
- ﴿The true servants of the Lord of Grace are those who walk gently on earth, and who, whenever the ignorant address them, say: 'Peace'.﴾ (25: 63)
- ﴿[And the true servants of God are] those who never bear witness to what is false, and whenever they pass by [people engaged in] frivolity, pass on with dignity.﴾ (25: 72)

The Narrator

'Abd al-Raḥmān 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 purpose of fasting is to maintain the path of being God-fearing, specifically restraining one's tongue and organs from doing what is forbidden. If this purpose is not achieved and a person indulges in what is forbidden during fasting, then such a fast is worthless in God's sight.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 6057.



Message and Meaning

1

In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) makes clear that the ultimate objective of fasting is to be God-fearing and to safeguard one's tongue and body organs against what is sinful. This is stated in the verse that establishes the duty of fasting. God says: 'Believers, fasting is decreed for you as it was decreed for those before you, so that you may be God-fearing'. (2: 183) When fasting, a person abstains from food and drink, but he is also required to abstain from all verbal falsehood which includes lying, backbiting and the like. He is further required to be in control of what he says, using no foul language and refusing to be drawn into a slanging match or exchange of verbal abuse. All such language is unacceptable, particularly when coupled with any loud noise. All this is disapproved of by the Prophet (peace be upon him) who says: "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'".⁽¹⁾ The one who commits such actions during fasting makes his fasting unacceptable and it will not be credited.

2

The Prophet uses the expression, 'God is in no need', to indicate that his action is totally discarded and unacceptable. The fact is that God is in no need of anyone and He benefits nothing from them. He says: 'People! It is you who stand in need of God, whereas He alone is free of all wants, worthy of all praise'. (35: 15)

3

God, Mighty and Exalted, has forbidden all verbal falsehood. He says: 'Turn away, then, from the loathsome evil of idolatrous beliefs and practices; and turn away from every word that is untrue'. (22: 30) He praises His servants who do not witness falsehood, neither say nor practise it. They do not even join a group that may say it. God says: '[And the true servants of God are] those who never bear witness to what is false, and whenever they pass by [people engaged in] frivolity, pass on with dignity'. (25: 72) The Prophet (peace be upon him) says that one of the worst major sins is giving false testimony. 'We were sitting with God's Messenger (peace be upon him) when he said: "Shall I tell you which the gravest sins are?" (He repeated this three times): "The association of partners with God, undutifulness to parents, and perjury (or stating falsehood)". God's Messenger (peace be upon him) was reclining, but he sat up and continued to repeat it until we thought: we wish he would stop'.⁽²⁾

4

The purpose of making fasting obligatory is not to train a toleration of hunger and thirst. Rather, it is what follows of restraining desire, controlling anger and keeping one's soul at peace. If nothing of this occurs as a result of fasting, and the person is not so affected, then all he achieves through fasting is being hungry and thirsty. This is what is expressed by the Prophet: 'Some fasting person gets nothing out of his fasting other than hunger and thirst, and some night worshipper gets nothing out of his night worship other than tired wakefulness'. In such cases, God does not care about such person's fasting and does not accept it, because the action itself is fruitless.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 1904; Muslim, 1151. (This is in Hadith 76 in this work.)

2 Related by al-Bukhari, 2654; Muslim, 87.

Implementation



As mentioned earlier, God has kept the reward He grants for fasting secret, saying: ‘All man’s actions are his except fasting: it is Mine and I reward it’.⁽¹⁾ He thus makes clear that fasting is treated at a higher level and its reward is indeed rich. Yet a person may say a word that incurs God’s wrath and it destroys all this reward. This tells us of the seriousness of falsehood, verbal and practical. It is something ruinous, leading to total loss in both this present life and the life to come. It behoves every Muslim to beware of it and steer away from it so that he does not ruin his good deeds.



God, Mighty and Exalted, wants His servants to fear and obey Him, and to refrain from what He has forbidden them. He does not want to restrict their lives by abstaining from food, drink and sex. He simply wants them to do what He bids them and refrain from what He forbids them, so that fasting becomes a training course in which they learn abandoning what is forbidden and doing their duties.



The objective of fasting is self-discipline and steering away from what is forbidden. It is not meant only for abstention from food and drink, which are lawful.



While food, drink and sex with one’s spouse are permissible except during the day of fasting, abstention from them during fasting is the way to draw closer to God. However this cannot be done until one has taken the first step of abandoning what God forbids, such as lying, wrongdoing, injustice and all types of aggression against other people.



God has forbidden saying what is false and also acting on it. This includes backbiting, sewing discord between people, urging what is evil and forbidding what is good, as well as all other forms of falsehood.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 5927; Muslim, 1151.

