

(Note: Wherever the word “you” or “your” is singular and refers to one human being, it is printed with an italic y, as in: you. Wherever such a word refers to God, the letter y is printed in capital, as in: You.)

For Fast 2 – August 23

Chapter 2

- 183 O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil.¹
- 184 For a certain number of days. But whoever among you is sick or on a journey, (he shall fast) a (like) number of other days. And those who find it extremely hard may effect redemption by feeding a poor one.² So whoever does good spontaneously, it is better for him; and that you fast is better for you if you know.
- 185 The month of Ramadan³ is that in which the Quran was revealed,⁴ a guidance to people and clear proofs of the guidance and the Criterion.⁵ So whoever of you is present in the month, he shall fast in it, and whoever is sick or on a journey, (he shall fast) a (like) number of other days. Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire hardship for you, and (He desires) that you should complete the number and that you should exalt the greatness of Allah for having guided you and that you may give thanks.
- 186 And when My servants ask you concerning Me, surely I am near. I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls on Me, so they should hear My call and believe in Me that they may walk in the right way.⁶
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- 188 And do not swallow up your property among yourselves by false means, nor seek to gain access thereby to the judges, so that you may swallow up a part of the property of (other) people wrongfully while you know.⁷

Notes:

1 Fasting is a religious institution almost as universal as prayer, and in Islam it is one of the five fundamental practical ordinances. “Fasting has in all ages and among all nations been an exercise much in use in times of mourning, sorrow and affliction” (Cruden’s Bible Concordance). But Islam has introduced quite a new meaning into the institution of fasting. It becomes an institution for the improvement of the moral and spiritual condition of man. This is plainly stated in the concluding words: *so that you may guard against evil*. The object is that man may learn how he can shun evil, and hence fasting in Islam does not mean simply abstaining from food, but from every kind of evil. Abstention from food is only a step to make a person realize that if he can, in obedience to Divine

injunctions, abstain from that which is otherwise lawful, how much more necessary is it to abstain from the evil ways which are forbidden by God.

- 2 The first two classes exempted are: (a) those who are sick and (b) those journeying. Both are required to fast afterwards when sickness or journey ends. What is sickness or journey every person can determine for himself. Someone who needs a medicine or is unable to bear the hardship of hunger or thirst should not fast. In journeying again, whether one can easily fast or not is the determining factor. The third exception is in the case of those who find it extremely difficult to bear the hardship of fasting. Such people may effect a redemption by giving food daily to a poor person. This exception covers the case of pregnant women, women who are breast feeding infants, old people who cannot bear fasting; also such sick people whose sickness is prolonged and such people whose journey extends over the whole year.
- 3 The revelation of the Quran commenced in the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Arabian year; hence, the month of Ramadan is particularly spoken of as being the month in which the Quran was revealed.
- 4 Elsewhere we are told that it was revealed on the *Lailat al-Qadr* or *the Night of Majesty* (97:1), a well-known night in the month of Ramadan, being the 25th or 27th or 29th night of that month. By the revelation of the Quran in the month of Ramadan is therefore meant the commencement of its revelation. The month of Ramadan is thus a memorial of the revelation of the Quran.
- 5 Firstly, the Quran is a “guidance” for all people, and therefore it contains teachings suitable and sufficient for all people in all countries and ages. Secondly, it contains “clear proofs” to demonstrate the truth of what it asserts. Thirdly, it contains arguments which afford a “criterion” (Arabic: *furqān*), separating truth from falsehood.
- 6 This verse speaks of the nearness of God to man and of the acceptance of his prayers to show that fasting is a spiritual exercise and it brings about spiritual awakening in man. Fasting undoubtedly awakens a living consciousness of the existence of God in the mind. This is the idea underlying the words: “When My servants ask you concerning Me”. A real and earnest search for God is raised in the mind through fasting. “I am near” is the reply to that inner search. And then follow the words: “I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls on Me”. *God is near*, but that consciousness only raises the further desire to get nearer and nearer to Him. For that man calls on God; he prays to Him to draw him closer and closer to Himself. And he is told that God accepts this prayer.
- 7 The command to abstain from illegally taking other people’s property is a fitting sequel to the injunction relating to fasting, for by fasting a person abstains from using what he has a legal right to, simply in obedience to Divine commandments. Fasting, in fact, enables a man to control his passions, and the more the passions are mastered, the less the greed for illegal acquisition.