

Guidelines to fast the six days of Shawwal

From the teaching of the Quran and Purified Sunnah

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Shawwal 11, 1441 H (June 3, 2020)

Revised: Shawwal 2, 1442H (May 14, 2021)

Revised: Shawwal 4, 1443H (May 5, 2021)

In the name of Allaah, ar-Rahman, and Ar-Raheem, Peace and blessings be upon the best of mankind, Mohammad Ibn 'Abdillaah, Sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam.

Below are some guidelines based upon the authentic hadith and discussion of scholars of Ahl-as-sunnah Wal-Jama'ah. I ask Allaah to make us return to the correctness of each matter/issue where there is a dispute by going back to the teaching of the Quran and Sunnah of our beloved Prophet (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam).

1. All the rulings of religion are the same for men and women unless there is clear evidence to prove otherwise. Hence when I used the male term, it should be understood that it applies equally to female believers.
2. Fasting the six days of Shawwal is recommended in an authentic hadith narrated by Abu Ayyub al-Ansari and reported by Imam Muslim. There are other companions who reported this hadith too and some of them are also authentic.
3. Fasting six days of Shawwal is nafl/sunnah, i.e. optional.
4. Fasting six days of Shawwal is not makrooh! (it is reported that Imam Malik, Abu Haneefah and some of his students used to consider fasting these days makrooh)
5. It is from the sunnah al-Qawliyyah. (i.e. the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam recommended this fasting verbally)
6. The reward of this fasting is equivalent to 60 days (worth two months). So along with the fasting of Ramadaan (which is worth 10 months) will be equivalent to fasting the whole year. This is because good deeds are multiplied ten times. This is mentioned clearly in an authentic hadith...
7. Having two intentions in one action is not permissible. So, if someone is making up the missed days of Ramadaan in Shawwal, can he at the same time intend to fast the six days of Shawwal? The answer is, that there is nothing in the sunnah that permits us to combine intentions in this manner! So, he has to fast them separately.
8. These six days can be done on any day of Shawwal except the following:
 - a. 1st of Shawwal, because this is the day of Eid Al-Fitr
 - b. Saturdays

[Note: Friday has some special rulings discussed below]

9. Fasting on Saturdays is prohibited for all types of optional fasting [i.e. Ashura, 'Arafah, six days of Shawwal, the white days, the fasting of Dawud etc...]. This is based on an authentic hadith reported by Imam Abu Dawud and others (authenticated by Imam Al-Albaani). So, under no circumstances, a person can fast one of the six days of Shawwal (or any other optional fasting) on a Saturday! Any obligatory fasting is, of course, allowed on Saturdays!

This is based upon the hadith reported by Imam Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah and Tirmidhi, Ahmed the following from the wordings of Ibn Maajah.

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا عَيْسَى بْنُ يُونُسَ، عَنْ ثَوْرِ بْنِ يَزِيدَ، عَنْ خَالِدِ بْنِ مَعْدَانَ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ بُسْرِ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - " لَا تَصُومُوا يَوْمَ السَّبْتِ إِلَّا فِيمَا افْتَرَضَ عَلَيْكُمْ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ أَحَدُكُمْ إِلَّا عَوْدَ عَنَبٍ أَوْ لِحَاءَ شَجَرَةٍ فَلْيَمِصَّهُ "

It was narrated from ‘Abdullah bin Busr that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

“Do not fast on Saturdays apart from days when you are obliged to fast. If anyone of you cannot find anything other than grape stalks or the bark of a tree, let him suck on it.” [Tirmidhi said hadith is hasan, Hakim said “Saheeh upon the condition of Al-Bukhari, Albani “sahih ala shartil bukhari”, Ibn Mulaqqin, ibn As-Sakan in At-talkhees (said it is sahih), Ibn Qudamah, Ibn Hibban, Ibn Khuzaymah, Al-Buhuti, As-Safareene Al-Hambali, Al-Mundhiri, Adh-Dhahabi, Al-’Aynee and others]

10. As for fasting on Friday, then please keep in mind the following scenarios which are based upon the clear Prophetic guidelines:

- We can't single out Friday to fast! For example, someone fasting Friday because Friday is a special day - this type of fasting is forbidden under all circumstances!
- If we want to fast for any other reason (in this case, one of the six days of Shawwal) then provided the fasting is habitual, we can just fast Friday by itself.
- If the fasting is not habitual, then we must couple it either with a day before or a day after!

Sahih muslim

عَنْ ابْنِ سِيرِينَ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " لَا تَخْتَصُوا لَيْلَةَ الْجُمُعَةِ بِقِيَامٍ مِنْ بَيْنِ اللَّيَالِي وَلَا تَخْتَصُوا يَوْمَ الْجُمُعَةِ بِصِيَامٍ مِنْ بَيْنِ الْأَيَّامِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَكُونَ فِي صَوْمٍ يَصُومُهُ أَحَدُكُمْ " .

“Do not single out the night (preceding) Friday among the nights for prayer and do not single out Friday among days for fasting but only when anyone among you is accustomed to fast (on dates) which coincide with this day (Friday).“ [Saheeh Muslim]

Based on this let's clarify some scenarios:

Scenario one: a person always fasts six days of Shawwal (i.e that is his habitual fasting days). This person can fast one of the six days of Shawwal on a Friday and he doesn't need to couple it with a day before or after!

Scenario two: Fasting six days of Shawwal is not a person's habit. In this case, if this person does intend to fast one of the six days of Shawwal on a Friday, he must either couple it with Thursday or Saturday! If he couples it with Thursday, then that Thursday he can fast one of his days of Shawwal.

If he didn't fast Thursday, he can still fast one of the six days of Shawwal on Friday but in this case, he has to couple it with Saturday. This Saturday (please pay attention), can't be regarded as one of his days of Shawwal because this is obligatory fasting that was obligated due to his fasting on Friday (because in

this case he didn't fast on Thursday and his fasting on Friday was not a habitual one!). This is because two intentions can't be combined in one act of worship as discussed earlier.

11. These six days can be done continuously, or can be separated! As long as they are done in the month of Shawwal, the person will fulfill the condition mentioned in the hadith.
12. There is an issue we should discuss here that the scholars differ. Can we fast optional fasting if we have obligatory fasting left? The majority of the scholars allow this except the Hanabilah. However, the correct position is, that all sorts of optional fasting is allowed even if we have leftover obligatory fasting
13. When it comes to the six days of Shawwal the scholars differ about what should be done first.

This is because the hadith says:

صحيح مسلم >> عَنْ عُمَرَ، بْنِ ثَابِتِ بْنِ الْحَارِثِ الْخَزْرَجِيِّ عَنْ أَبِي أَيُّوبَ الْأَنْصَارِيِّ، - رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ - أَنَّهُ حَدَّثَهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " مَنْ صَامَ رَمَضَانَ ثُمَّ أَتْبَعَهُ سِتًّا مِنْ شَوَّالٍ كَانَ كَصِيَامِ الدَّهْرِ " .

Abu Ayyub al-Ansari (Allah be pleased with him) reported Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying:

He who observed the fast of Ramadan and then followed it with six (fasts) of Shawwal. it would be as if he fasted perpetually. [reported by Imam Muslim]

Due to this specific wording, a group of scholars' suggestions is that he should do the missed days of Ramadaan first and then he should do the six days of Shawwal. This is the position of Sheikh Ibn Baaz, Al-Fawzan, Sheikh Al-Raslaan and many others. [note: some of the scholars also hold the opinion that it is not permissible to fast optional fasting if you have obligatory fasting due! Whereas some of them allow fasting optional even when obligatory is due but in this case, they recommend the obligatory to be made up first because of the wording of the hadith!]

Whereas the others said when someone does finish his six days of Shawwal and then, later on, makes up Ramadaan, once he makes up all of his Ramadaan fastings, he has fulfilled the condition mentioned in the hadith. Therefore, their position is, that he can do the six days of Shawwal first (because once the month of Shawwal is over, he will lose this opportunity). And as for the missed days of Ramadaan, he can make it later on as the matter is easy and has flexibility!

What seems to be correct is the second position. However, if someone can easily finish his missed days of Ramadaan and can still make the six days of Shawwal in Shawwal, then probably it is wiser to do the obligatory first so he is out of the dispute! However, if he sees it will not be possible for him to finish all the missed days of fasting and then catch up on the six days, for him, it is better to do the six days of Shawwal and then make up the missed days of Ramadaan later on and hope to receive the reward of fasting the whole year.

14. Some people of knowledge said these six days can be done in any other month. It doesn't necessarily need to be in Shawwal. This position is not correct because the specific text puts a special mention of the month and that is "Shawwal". So, if the legislator restricted something, we

can't generalize it without clear proof! Similarly, if something is left general by the legislator, we can't restrict it without clear proof! And Allaah knows the best.

I hope these guidelines would help our beloved elders, brothers, sisters, and children to fulfill this beautiful act of worship and present it in the report card for a happy ending in the hereafter. We hope this report card will be full of good deeds and will be given in our right hands and we can go back to our family happy and pleased.

Jazaakumullaahu khairan for giving me the opportunity to compile and share the goodness. If anything that is mentioned is correct then it is from Allaah and if anything is mentioned that is wrong then it is from my weakness and from Shaytan. I ask Allaah to forgive me, and my parents, my wife, children and all my beloved relatives and friends in the same faith.

Abu Abu Hurayrah

Raihan Kamal

In need of Allaah's Mercy the Most

Night of Shawwal 11, 1441H

June 3, 2020

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