

The voluntary fasts of the year

Fasts that are recommended, not required — what the Sunnah names, and the days you may not fast at all.



☀ Three days a month

“The fasting of three days a month is equal to the fasting of a whole year.” Many keep them in the middle of the month.

- “Your body has a right on you” — do not overreach

Sahih al-Bukhari 1979, 1975 • Sunan at-Tirmidhi, Kitab al-Sawm • hasan

☀ The fast of Dawud

“The fasting most beloved to Allah was the fasting of Dawud, who used to fast on alternate days.” Half the year, and no more.

Sahih al-Bukhari 3420, 1974

☀ Mondays and Thursdays

Asked about fasting Monday he ﷺ said: it is the day I was born and revelation came. ‘A’ishah said he was keen to fast Monday and Thursday.

Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Siyam • Sunan at-Tirmidhi, Kitab al-Sawm • hasan

☀ Sha‘ban

“I never saw him fast a whole month except Ramadan, and I never saw him fast more in any month than in Sha‘ban.”

Sahih al-Bukhari 1969, 1970

☀ Six days of Shawwal

Whoever fasts Ramadan and then six days of Shawwal, it is as though he fasted a year. They need not run together.

Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Siyam

☀ ‘Ashura’, and the ninth

He ﷺ found the Jews of Madinah fasting the day Allah saved Musa, said “we have more claim to Musa”, and fasted the tenth of Muharram.

- He intended the ninth as well, the year after

Sahih al-Bukhari 2004, 3397 • Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Siyam

☀ The day of ‘Arafah

Fasting it is reported to expiate the year before and the year after. The pilgrim standing at ‘Arafah does not fast: he ﷺ drank milk there.

Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Siyam • Sahih al-Bukhari 1988, 1989

☀ Muharram

The best fasting after Ramadan is in Allah’s month Muharram — one of the four sacred months of the year.

Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Siyam • Sahih al-Bukhari 4406

☀ Days you may not fast

The two ‘Ids are out: one is the day you break the fast, the other the day you eat your sacrifice. Friday alone is not fasted.

- No fasting straight through the night — al-wisal

Sahih al-Bukhari 1991, 5571, 1985, 1965