20165 - Fasting while Traveling: Permissible?

the question

If a person travels in Ramadan and he is fasting, is it better for him not to fast, or should he continue fasting?

Summary of answer

The majority of scholars view that fasting whilst traveling is permissible. If the traveler fasts, it counts and he does not have to make it up. For more, please see the detailed answer

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Fasting while traveling: Permissible?

The four Imams and the majority of the Sahabah and Tabi'in were of the view that fasting whilst traveling is permissible and is correct and valid. If the traveler fasts, it counts and he does not have to make it up. (Al-Mawsu'ah al-Fiqhiyyah, vol. 28, p. 73)

Fasting or not fasting while traveling: Which is better?

As to what is better, that depends:

1- If fasting and not fasting are the same, in the sense that fasting does not affect him, then in this case fasting is better, because of the following evidence:

a. Abu'l-Darda' (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "We went out with the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) [on a journey] during the month of Ramadan when it was intensely hot, until one of us would put his hand on his head because of the

intense heat, and no one among us was fasting apart from the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and ‘Abd-Allah ibn Rawahah.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 1945; Muslim, no. 1122)

b. Fasting while traveling means that one fulfills one's duty more quickly, because making it up later means delaying it, but fasting in Ramadan means doing it sooner.
c. It is usually easier for the one who has this duty, because fasting and breaking the fast with the people is easier than starting to fast all over again.
d. It makes the most of a blessed time, namely Ramadan, for Ramadan is better than other times, because it is the time when fasting is obligatory. Based on this evidence the view of al-Shafi`i, which is that fasting is better in the case of one for whom fasting and not fasting are the same, is most likely to be correct.

2- If not fasting is easier for him, then in this case we say that not fasting (when traveling) is better. If something will give him hardship, then in his case fasting becomes makruh, because doing something that causes hardship when there is a concession indicates that one is spurning a concession granted by Allah.

3- If it causes unbearable difficulty, then in this case it becomes haram for him to fast. The evidence for that is the report narrated by Muslim from Jabir ibn ‘Abd-Allah (may Allah be pleased with them), that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) went out to Makkah in the year of the Conquest in Ramadan, and fasted until he reached Kura’ al-Ghamim. The people were fasting, but he called for a cup of water and lifted it up so that the people could see it, then he drank it. After that, he was told that some of the people had continued to fast. He said, “Those are the disobedient, those are the disobedient.” According to another report, he was told, “The people are finding it hard to fast, and they are waiting to see what you will do.” So he called for a cup of water after ‘Asr. (1114) So he described those who fasted even though it was very difficult as being disobedient. (Al-Sharh al-Mumti’ by Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him), vol. 6, p. 355).

Al-Nawawi and al-Kamal ibn al-Humam said:

“The ahadith which indicate that it is better not to fast are to be interpreted as referring to those who will be harmed by fasting; in some of them this is clearly stated, so they must be interpreted in this manner, so as to reconcile between the ahadith. That is better than neglecting some of them or claiming that they have been abrogated, without definitive evidence to that effect. In the case of those for whom fasting and not fasting are the same, they quoted as evidence the hadith of ‘Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her), that Hamzah ibn ‘Amr al-Aslami (may Allah be pleased with him) said to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): “Should I fast whilst traveling ?” – and he used to fast a lot. He (the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)) said: “if you want to, then fast; if you don’t want to, then do not fast.” (Agreed upon)

And Allah knows best.