222129 - His work schedule prevents him from breaking his fast after Maghrib in Ramadan; is it permissible for him not to fast?

the question

There is a man who is working in Italy; he works all day, and the system of work there means that he is not allowed to eat except at the scheduled mealtimes. Therefore he cannot fast, because if he fasts he will not be able to break his fast at the appointed time of iftaar. But if he does not break his fast, and fasts continually, this will be extremely hard for him and he will not be able to work. Is it permissible for him not to fast, and to offer expiation for each day?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Fasting Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam, and every Muslim should be keen to do it as Allah has commanded him, and he should not be negligent concerning it or give worldly work precedence over it. If there is a conflict with his worldly work and he is able to reconcile between them, then he should do so, thus achieving what is in his best interests both in this world and the hereafter. If he is not able to reconcile between them, then he should not be heedless with regard to one of the pillars of Islam and one of its greatest foundations, because of some worldly concern. Rather he should give precedence to fasting, and he should examine the worldly matter that conflicts with it. If he can reduce that thing, then he should reduce it, and if he can change it, then he should change it, even if it will bring a lower income, because the hereafter is better and greater in reward. Whoever is eager and pays attention to matters of his religion, Allah will suffice him in his worldly affairs, as He, may He be glorified and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And whosoever fears Allah and keeps his duty to Him, He will make a way for him to get out (from every difficulty).

3. And He will provide him from (sources) he never could imagine”

[al-Talaaq 65:2-3].

Imam Ahmad (20215) narrated that one of the Companions of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) took hold of my hand and started to teach me some of that which Allah, may He be blessed and exalted, had taught him, and he said: “You will never give up something out of fear of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, but Allah will give you something better than it.”

Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in ad-Da‘eefah (1/62).

Ibn Maajah (257) narrated from ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ood (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever focuses all his concerns on one issue, namely the Hereafter, Allah will suffice him and spare him the worries of this world. But whoever has many concerns about different worldly issues, Allah will not care which of these worries will cause his death.”

Classed as hasan by al-Albaani in Saheeh Ibn Maajah (207)

At-Tirmidhi (2465) narrated that Anas ibn Maalik (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever is mainly concerned about the Hereafter, Allah will make him feel independent of others and will make him focused and content, and his worldly affairs will fall into place. But whoever is mainly concerned with this world, Allah will make him feel in constant need of others and will make him distracted and unfocused, and he will get nothing of this world except what is decreed for him.”

Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh at-Tirmidhi

You should not give up fasting in Ramadan because of this invalid system of rules or any other reason that is not regarded, according to Islamic teaching, as a valid reason for not fasting. So it is not permissible for you not to fast and to offer expiation by feeding the poor, because you are able to fast. Rather offering expiation is a concession granted to those who are unable to fast, such as

those who are elderly and frail, or those who have chronic sicknesses for which there is no hope of recovery. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “And as for those who can fast with difficulty, (e.g. an old man, etc.), they have (a choice either to fast or) to feed a Miskeen (poor person) (for every day)” [al-Baqarah 2:184].

This refers to those who found it burdensome and unbearably difficult, such as the elderly; they could compensate by feeding one poor person for each day they did not fast.

Tafseer as-Sa‘di (p. 86)

Shaykh ‘Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Humayd and Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn Baaz (may Allah have mercy on them) said:

The basic principle is that it is obligatory to fast Ramadan and to have the intention to fast from the night before; this is required of all Muslims who are accountable, and they should start the day fasting, except those to whom the Lawgiver has granted a concession allowing them to start the day not fasting. This refers to those who are sick or travelling, and others whose situation is likened to theirs. Those who do hard work are included among those who are accountable, and are not like those who are sick or travelling. Therefore they are obliged to have the intention of fasting Ramadan from the night before, and to start their day fasting; if any of them is compelled to break his fast during the day, then it is permissible for him to break the fast and eat or drink enough to ward off harm from himself, then refrain from eating and drinking for the rest of that day, which he should then make up at a suitable time. If a person does not encounter such necessity, then he must continue fasting. This is what is dictated by the shar‘i evidence from the Qur’an and Sunnah, and by the words of the leading scholars of all madhhabs. End quote.

Majmoo‘ Fataawa Ibn Baaz (15/245-246)

This man should submit to the administration of his work a request to be exempted from this unfair rule, so that they will allow him to break his fast at sunset, or schedule his work during the night. If they agree to that, all well and good; otherwise he should look for another job that will not cause him to neglect the fast.

Whoever gives up something for the sake of Allah, Allah will compensate him with something better than it.

For more information, please see the answer to question no. 65803.

And Allah knows best.