389309 - Ruling on delaying making up Ramadan fasts because of mental illness (intrusive thoughts – waswas)

the question

My sister began to make up the fasts that she did not make up until two Ramadans had passed. The reason for her delay was that she was waiting to recover from the intrusive thoughts (waswas) that came to her in the second Ramadan, but now she is hastening to make them up, in sha Allah. Was she sinning for her delay in making them up until now? Or is there no sin on her, because she did not delay it deliberately?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

I.

If someone does not fast some days in Ramadan, then he is enjoined to make them up before the next Ramadan comes. This has been explained previously in the answer to question no. 26865.

II.

The sickness of intrusive thoughts (waswas) is of different levels that vary in intensity and impact on the patient. Hence if the one who is affected by intrusive thoughts delays making up the missed fasts until the next Ramadan begins, there are two scenarios:

The first scenario:

The intrusive thoughts have reached such a degree that it becomes difficult for the sick person to fast, such as if he has an urgent need to take medicines during the day, otherwise he will be exposed to intrusive thoughts that will exacerbate his condition as a result of fasting, and he is

unable to ward off those thoughts except by delaying the fast.

In this case, it is prescribed for the person to delay making up the fast, because Islam came to alleviate hardship and difficulty.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says: {Allah does not place on any soul a burden greater than it can bear} [Al-Baqarah 2:286].

And Allah, may He be Exalted, says in the verse of fasting: {and whoever is ill or on a journey - then an equal number of other days. Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship} [Al-Baqarah 2:185].

Shaykh `Abd ar-Rahman as-Sa`di (may Allah have mercy on him) said: That is, Allah (st) wants to make the paths that lead to attaining His pleasure very easy for you. Hence everything that Allah has enjoined upon His slaves is very easy. If something happens to make it difficult, then there is another option to make it easier, either by waiving the obligation or by reducing it in some way.

End quote from *Tafsir as-Sa`di*, p. 86-87.

From such texts, the scholars derived a principle which says that hardship dictates concessions.

What is meant by hardship here is extraordinary hardship which exhausts and harms a person.

It was narrated from Abu Sa`id al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm.” Narrated by al-Hakim (2/57-58). Ibn Majah (2340) narrated from `Ubadah ibn as-Samit (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) ruled that there should be “neither harming nor reciprocating harm.”

Ash-Shatibi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

If the extraordinary hardship has to do with actions, such as a sick person who is not able to fast or to pray standing, or the pilgrim who is not able to do Hajj walking or riding except with difficulty that is of a greater degree than is usual for such actions, then this is the one concerning whom

Allah, may He be Exalted, says: {Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship} [al-Baqarah 2:185]. And it is concerning him that the concession was prescribed…

End quote from *Al-Muwafaqat*, 2/230.

The second scenario:

These intrusive thoughts do not make fasting more difficult than any fasting person usually feels, and it does not harm him. For this level of sickness, there is no concession to allow delaying making up the fasts.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Hardship dictates that there should be a level of relief that is appropriate to it. If the hardship takes the form of sickness and pain that causes harm, it is permissible for him not to fast, or to pray sitting or on his side. This is by analogy with shortening the prayer (when travelling). If the hardship results in tiredness, the pursuit of benefits in this world and the hereafter naturally involves effort and makes one tired, and the one who does not strive and get tired does not appreciate rest; rather the more a person strives and feels tired, the more he appreciates rest.

End quote from *I`lam al-Muwaqqi`in*, 3/360.

Based on that, the woman who is sick must examine this issue and be honest and sincere to Allah, may He be Exalted, in her estimation. If her sickness matches the first scenario, then there is no blame on her for this delay.

But if her sickness matches the second scenario, meaning that there is no reason to grant the concession allowing her to delay making up the fasts, then she must hasten to make them up now, and repent to Allah, may He be Exalted, with regret for the past and resolve not to do such a thing again in the future.

But is she obliged, in addition to making up the fasts, to offer expiation for the delay? We have previously discussed the difference of scholarly opinion regarding that, in the answer to question

no. 26865.

And Allah knows best.