406646 - Does Cleaning Ears Affect the Fast

the question

I cleaned my ears during the daytime in Ramadan for 10 days; as I suffer from an allergy that causes itching and scratching in my ear, and I used to clean it as a usual habit, with or without scratching, and my cleaning was vigorous with a tissue, or with a stick that I insert as far as possible into the ear. I follow the Shafi`i school of thought, and I thought that cleaning the ear was only disliked, but when I read the ruling today and was shocked to find that it breaks the fast according to the Shafi`is. So, should I make up for the past days when I cleaned my ears, or is my fasting considered valid?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Cleaning the ears by inserting a tissue, a stick, or the like does not invalidate fasting according to the four schools of thought, and we have not come across any scholar's opinion that this invalidates fasting.

However, if cleaning is done by pouring something into the ear, such as medicine or drops, and it reaches the inside of the brain, the majority of Jurists, and this is the most correct view according to Ash-Shafi`i, have opined that the fast is invalidated if medicine, oil, or water is used.

Ash-Shafi`i has another opinion, which is that this does not invalidate the fast.

An-Nawawi said: "If he pours water or something else into his ears, and it reaches his brain, he breaks his fast, according to the most correct view among us, and Al-Ghazali did not consider drops as a nullifier of the fast." End quote from "Al-Majmu.(6/320) "`

Al-Baghawi said: "If he eats something intentionally, even if little, or drinks, or uses nasal

medicine, or nasal or ear drops ; such that it reaches the brain, or has an enema, or uses drops in his urethra and it reaches the bladder - his fast is invalidated.

It is said: If he pours something into his ear, it does not invalidate his fast, even if its effect appears in the brain; because there is no passage from the ear to the brain, but it reaches it through the pores." End quote from "At-Tahdhib fi Fiqh Al-Imam Ash-Shafi`i.(3/161) "

Al-`Imrani said: "If he pours water into his ear, and it reaches his brain... there are two views: The first one - which is the view of Sheikh Abu Ishaq and Abu `Ali Al-Sanji - is that it invalidates his fast; because it reaches his brain, and it is like nasal medicine.

The second - which is the view of Al-Mas`udi: that it does not invalidate his fast; because it does not penetrate from the ear to the brain, but it reaches it through the pores." End quote from "Al-Bayan fi Madhhab Al-Imam Ash-Shafi`i.(3/501) "

It has been previously stated on our site in Fatwa No. (80208), that ear drops do not break the fast according to the more correct opinion.

In conclusion: Cleaning your ears while fasting with a tissue, a stick, or the like has no effect on the validity of your fast, and therefore you are not required to make up those days.

It appears that the information that reached you about breaking the fast by cleaning the ear was talking about cleaning the ear with water - ear flushing; this, and the like, is what invalidates the fast according to your school of thought.

If you have done that, then you must make up the days in which you cleaned your ears with water, or the like, because that invalidates the fast - according to the school of thought of Imam Ash-Shafi`i, which you follow.

Nevertheless, we advise you to abandon this harmful and dangerous habit and to consult a specialist doctor, as this behavior poses a risk to your ears.

And Allah knows best.