567657 - Consequences of Unkept Fasts Due To Acid Reflux

the question

My mother suffers from chonic acid reflux, and during the last few years, fasting during Ramadan has become difficult for her. She tries to fast, but she faces great difficulty, which makes her take frequent breaks during Ramadan. This went on for several years, when she was not able to make up the days that she did not fast.

Should she stop fasting and feed the poor instead of that?

Is she has to pay the penalty (fidyah, in this case feeding the poor), is it permissible for her to observe voluntary fasts, because fasting for only one day, with long breaks between the days of fasting, is something that she is able to do?

If she has to pay the penalty, does she also have to make up the days that she missed and did not fast during the previous years?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

I.

It is permissible not to fast because of sickness in some cases:

1. When sickness results in clear pain and hardship that is more than what is usually bearable.
2. When there is the fear that the sickness will be made worse by fasting.
3. When there is the fear that recovery will be delayed because of fasting.
4. When the healthy person fears that he will become ill because of fasting.
5. When the sick person needs medicine during the day, and cannot delay it until night.

All of these are excuses which make it permissible not to fast.

An-Nawawi said in *Al-Majmu`* (6/261): The sick person who is unable to fast because of sickness from which there is the hope that he will recover is not obliged to fast… this applies if it will clearly be difficult for him to fast.

It is not stipulated that his condition should reach the point where he cannot fast. Rather our companions said: The condition for it being permissible not to fast is that fasting will cause hardship for him, to the decree that he cannot bear it. End quote.

And he said: As for mild sickness that does not result in clear hardship, it is not permissible for him to break the fast in that case, and there is no difference of opinion among us regarding that.

End quote from *Al-Majmu`*, 6/261.

Ibn Qudamah (may Allah have mercy on him) said in *Al-Mughni* (4/403):

The type of sickness that makes it permissible not to fast is extreme sickness that will be exacerbated by fasting, or recovery will be delayed by fasting. It was said to Ahmad: When can the sick person break the fast? He said: When he is not able to do it. It was said: Such as fever? He said: What sickness is worse than fever? …

The healthy person who fears that he will become sick if he fasts is like the sick person who fears that his sickness may be exacerbated if he fasts, in terms of it being permissible not to fast, because the sick person is only permitted not to fast for fear that fasting will make his sickness worse or make his recovery take longer. So the fear of becoming sick again comes under the same heading. End quote.

So if fasting will cause severe hardship to your mother, this is a valid excuse which makes it permissible for her not to fast.

II.

If your mother is able to fast when there are longer intervals in between, then she must make up

the fasts that she missed, and feeding the poor will not resolve the matter, because Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those who came before you, that you may become pious,

[fasting] for a specific number of days; but if any of you is ill, or on a journey, he should fast the same number of other days} [Al-Baqarah 2:183-184].

As for the one who will be harmed by fasting at all times, he is unable to fast, and what is required in his case is to feed the poor, because Allah, may He be exalted, says: {For those who can fast only with extreme difficulty, there is a way to compensate, which is to feed a needy person [for each day]} [Al-Baqarah 2:184].

Al-Bukhari (4505) narrated that Ibn `Abbas said: This has not been abrogated. It refers to an old man or an old woman who are unable to fast; they should feed one poor person for each day.

Al-Bukhari (may Allah have mercy on him) said in his Sahih: Chapter on the verse {[fasting] for a specific number of days; but if any of you is ill, or on a journey, he should fast the same number of other days. For those who can fast only with extreme difficulty, there is a way to compensate, which is to feed a needy person [for each day]} [Al-Baqarah 2:184]. … as for the old man, if he is unable to fast, Anas used to feed the poor after he grew old, one poor person for each day, giving him bread and meat, and he did not fast.

Some doctors and specialists in the healthcare field recommend fasting for those who are suffering from acid reflux and stomach ulcers, because it helps to reduce the symptoms connected to production of stomach acid.

III.

What your mother must do is make up the fasts that she missed, then if the delay in making them up was for a valid reason, she does not have to do anything except make them up. But if the delay was for no reason, meaning that she could have made up those fasts during the year, then in

addition to making them up, she must also pay the penalty (fidyah), according to the majority of scholars, which is feeding one needy person for each day, and the penalty is not doubled or increased if more than one year has passed.

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in *Al-Majmu`* (6/366): Discussion of scholarly views regarding one who delays making up Ramadan fasts with no excuse until the next Ramadan begins:

We have stated that in our view, he must fast the current Ramadan, then make up what he missed of the previous one, and for each day, in addition to fasting, he must pay the penalty, which is one mudd of staple food [for each day]. This is the view of Ibn `Abbas, Abu Hurayrah, `Ata ibn Abi Rabah, al-Qasim ibn Muhammad, az-Zuhri, al-Awza`i, Malik, ath-Thawri, Ahmad and Is-haq, except that ath-Thawri said: The penalty is two mudds for each day.

Al-Hasan al-Basri, Ibrahim an-Nakha`i, Abu Hanifah, al-Muzani and Dawud said: He should make up the missed fasts and does not have to offer any penalty. End quote.

In the answer to question no. 26865, we stated that what is most likely to be the case is that he does not have to pay the penalty, but if he does pay it to be on the safe side, that is good.

Conclusion:

So long as your mother is able to fast, it is not valid for her to feed the poor [as compensation for that]. Rather she should break the fast when she encounters great difficulty, and make the fasts up later. She has to make up all the fasts that she missed, spacing out the days according to what she is able to do.

And Allah knows best.