

Then another concession is granted: «but if any of you is ill, or on a journey, he should fast the same number of other days». That is because in most cases these things entail hardship, so Allah has granted a concession allowing these people to break the fast.

Because it is essential that every believer should attain the benefits of fasting, Allah instructed them to make up the fast on other days, when the sickness is over and the journey has ended, and one is at ease again.

«the same number of other days» indicates that he should make up the number of days missed in Ramadan, whether it is the whole month or less, and it is permissible to fast on short, cool days to make up for long, hot days, and vice versa.

«For those who can fast only with extreme difficulty» that is, they are able to fast, but with difficulty

«there is a way to compensate» for each day they did not fast «which is to feed a needy person [for each day]». This was the ruling at the beginning, when fasting was first enjoined and they were not used to it. As it was difficult for them, Allah the Most Wise introduced it gradually in the easiest manner, giving those who found it too difficult the choice between fasting – which was preferable – or feeding the needy instead. Hence He said: «And it is better for you to fast, if only you knew».

Then after that fasting was made binding upon everyone who is able to do it; those who are not able to do it may break the fast and make up the same number of other days.

It was also stated that the phrase «For those who can fast only with extreme difficulty» 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. This is the correct view.

«Ramadan is the month in which the Qur'an was sent down» that is, the fast that you are enjoined to observe is the month of Ramadan,