



WHAT IS THE FAST WHICH PLEASES GOD ?

When we talk about fasting, we often think of Lent and Ramadan, and of depriving ourselves of food. However, fasting is about much more than food; it is an inner attitude and a spiritual act.

The main reason for fasting should not be to simply go hungry, but mainly to spend more time with God, devoting your heart solely to seeking Him and hearing from Him, rather than spending time on other things.

You can fast from many things, not just

food. You can also fast from TV, from the news, from screens and social media, etc.

In biblical times, God approved of fasting when it was practised for the right reasons but not if it was to impress others, to appear more righteous than others, to compensate for wilful sinning, or merely to fulfil a religious duty.

In this respect, God is like a father who would rather his children show Him affection from the heart than out of obligation.

In the beginning of the book of the prophet Isaiah, in chapter 58, God is speaking to his people who have become pretty content with religious rituals, including fasting, but have ignored injustice and the poor, and people in need around them :

« They act so pious!... They come to the Temple every day... and seem delighted to learn all about Me...pretending they want to be near Me. 'We have fasted before You !' they say. 'Why aren't You impressed? We have been very hard on ourselves... and You don't even notice it!'

--It's because you are fasting to please yourselves. Even while you fast, you keep oppressing your workers... What good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with Me. »

In verses : 6-7 He describes the kind of fasting He wants : *« This is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help. »*

God tells his people, *« If you want to fast in a way that pleases Me, start by making things right with others. Stop mistreating them, act lovingly towards others. »*

Indeed, what use is religious fasting if you are mean to others, if you quarrel, have a wicked tongue, cheat on your spouse, or conduct dishonest business ?

The Lord's response is essentially that they are hypocrites. It is a call not only for sincere worship, but also for generosity and kindness.

IN SUMMARY : We should not fast out of obligation, to impress others, or to demonstrate our piety or zeal. Neither should we fast just to get hungry and prove something to God, nor to receive something from Him.

Our central motive should be to spend more time with Him because we love Him. This can be done at any time and does not have to be dictated by religion. We should also treat others well and have compassion all the time.

God loves you deeply. He only wants your heart.