71203 - If he travels during Ramadaan to another country that started the fast at a different time, how should he fast?

the question

If a Muslim travels during Ramadaan to another country where they started the fast later or earlier than his country, and he stays in that country until Eid, with which of the two countries should he break his fast?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

If a man travels from one country to another where the moonsighting was different, the basic principle is that he should start and end the fast according to the country he is in when it is established that the month has ended. But if that means that he has fasted for less than twenty-nine days, then he has to complete the number, because the lunar month cannot be less than twenty-nine days. This principle is based on the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): “When you see it (the new moon) then fast, and when you see it then break the fast,” and “The month is twenty-nine days, so do not fast until you see it, and do not stop fasting until you see it.” And in the hadeeth of Kurayb is says that Umm al-Fadl sent him to Mu’aawiyah in Syria, and Kurayb told Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the people had seen the new moon of Ramadaan on Friday night in Syria. Ibn ‘Abbaas said: “But we saw it on Saturday night, so we will carry on fasting until we complete thirty days or until we see it.” Kurayb said: “Is not the sighting and fasting of Mu’aawiyah sufficient for you?” He said: “No; this is what the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) enjoined upon us.”

There follow some examples which explain this principle:

1 – He moved from a land where the people started fasting on Sunday to a land where the people

started fasting on Saturday, and they broke the fast on Sunday after twenty-nine days of fasting. He should break the fast with them but he has to make up one day later on.

2 – He moved from a land where the people started fasting on Sunday to a land where the people started fasting on Monday. They stopped fasting on a Wednesday after thirty days of fasting. He should carry on fasting with them even if that means he does more than thirty days, because he is in a place where the new moon has not been sighted, so it is not permissible for him to break the fast. This is similar to the situation if he traveled whilst fasting from a place where the sun sets at 6 p.m. to a land where the sun does not set until 7 p.m. – he should not break his fast until the sun sets at 7 p.m., because Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“then complete your Sawm (fast) till the nightfall. And do not have sexual relations with them (your wives) while you are in I‘tikaaf (i.e. confining oneself in a mosque for prayers and invocations leaving the worldly activities) in the mosques. These are the limits (set) by Allaah, so approach them not. Thus does Allaah make clear His Ayaat (proofs, evidences, lessons, signs, revelations, verses, laws, legal and illegal things, Allaah’s set limits, orders, etc.) to mankind that they may become Al-Muttaqoon (the pious)”

[al-Baqarah 2:187]

3 – He moved from a land where the people started fasting on Sunday to a land where the people started fasting on Monday, and they stopped fasting on Tuesday after twenty-nine days. He should break the fast with them and their fasting will have been twenty-nine days while his fasting will have been thirty days.

4 – He moved from a land where the people started fasting on Sunday and stopped fasting on Tuesday after thirty days, to a land where the people started fasting on Sunday and stopped fasting on Monday after twenty-nine days. He should break the fast with them, and he does not have to make up one day, because he has completed twenty-nine days.

The evidence that he has to break the fast in the first example is that the new moon has been sighted, and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, “When you see it, stop

fasting.” The evidence that he has to make up one day is the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): “The month is twenty-nine days,” so it cannot be less than twenty-nine days.

The evidence that he may continue to fast for more than thirty days in the second example is the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), “When you see it, then stop fasting.” So ending the fast is connected to the sighting of the moon, and if it is not sighted then that day is Ramadaan in that place, so it is not permissible for him to break the fast.

The ruling in the third and fourth examples is obvious.

This is what we think is the ruling with regard to this issue, and it is based on the most correct view, which is that the ruling varies according to the moonsighting. As for the view that the ruling does not vary according to the moonsighting, and that when the moon is sighted according to the shar’i conditions in one place, all the people must start or end the fast, this ruling depends on the evidence of the sighting of the moon, but he has to start fasting or stop fasting discreetly so that he does appear to be going against the community. End quote.