



Linguistic and Contextual Analysis of Fasting in Surah al-Baqarah: A Jewish-Christian Heritage in 7th Century Arabia

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Abstract: This research examines the Islamic obligation of fasting during the month of Ramadan as outlined in the Quran (Q 2:183-5). The author argues that many Islamic scholars have underestimated the importance and significance of this religious duty, instead focusing on the allowances and exemptions provided in the Quranic verses. Through a semantic analysis of the language and structure of Q 2:183-5, the paper contends that the Quran emphasizes fasting as a crucial act of worship that should not be taken lightly. The conditional sentence structure in the verses is interpreted as a rhetorical device to highlight the benefits of fasting, rather than merely providing relief or exceptions. Furthermore, the paper argues that the Quranic mandate for fasting was not novel, as it built upon pre-existing fasting traditions among earlier faith communities like Judaism, Christianity, and even ancient Greek and Buddhist practices. This suggests that the first recipients of the Quran would have understood fasting as a serious religious obligation. In conclusion, the research challenges the common scholarly view that the Quran provides extensive leniency regarding the Ramadan fast. Instead, it posits that the Quranic approach emphasizes the importance and wisdom behind this act of devotion, which Muslims should not underestimate or treat too lightly.

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Introduction

Q 2:183-5 orders Muslims to fast as one of the pillars of Islam, making it mandatory for the entire month of Ramadan. However, there are exceptions for people who are hindered by certain reasons, such as illness or travel. Instead, the person must fast on another day or pay *fidyah* if they cannot make up for it on another day. Because it is permissible to do *qadha* (make-up fasts) on other days, many scholars underestimate the obligation to fast.¹ Meanwhile, several health experts, doctors, and scientists have a different view. According to them, fasting is beneficial for health and can be a solution to

¹ Ibn Abi Hatim, *Tafsir Ibn Abi Hatim*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2019).

health crises such as obesity and diabetes.² From here, we see a paradox: ulama trivialize fasting, while doctors campaign for it.

Regarding previous research related to Ramadan fasting, according to Ibn Abbas and Ibn Umar, it is best not to fast when traveling, whereas according to Ahmad b. Hanbal, fasting while traveling is *makruh* (disliked).³ Furthermore, according to Ibn Sirin, as long as someone is sick, even if it is only a small scratch on the hand, they should not fast.⁴ The opinions of these classical scholars have become material for discussion among modern scholars regarding the necessity of fasting. According to Bouchareb, Siham, et al., shared decision-making is essential to empower patients to make the right decisions regarding Ramadan fasting, as well as diabetes education before Ramadan to help people with diabetes experience Ramadan safely.⁵ However, according to Yousuf and Ahmedani, there was a significant improvement in symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress in diabetes sufferers after Ramadan fasting, indicating that Ramadan fasting is beneficial.⁶ This research is supported by Tuzun and Cavus, who state that intermittent fasting and eating less are crucial for protecting health, as recommended by modern medical research.⁷ Thus, previous research confirms that making up for fasting remains an unresolved issue because each expert has different findings.

The weakness of previous studies is that they did not thoroughly examine the linguistic aspects of Q 2:183-5. In fact, linguistic characteristics are sacred because the Qur'an is God's word, and God cannot make mistakes in pronouncing His words. Therefore, even though the Qur'an was delivered in seventh-century Arabic, its linguistic features remain sacred and must be correct. The historical aspects of the Qur'an, shown by historical records regarding the conditions of its first recipients, are instruments to

² Akhtar Ali Baloach, et al., "Awareness among the Muslim Diabetic Patients about the Fasting in Ramadan," *Rawal Medical Journal* 47, no. 2 (2022): 298–301.

³ Abi Abdillah Muhammad ibn Ahmad Al-Anshari al Qurthubi, *Al-Jami' Li Ahkam Al-Qur'an* 10, (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1993).

⁴ Abu Bakar Ahmad bin Ali ar Razial al-Jashash, *Ahkam Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2020).

⁵ Siham Bouchareb, et al., "I Am My Own Doctor": A Qualitative Study of the Perspectives and Decision-Making Process of Muslims with Diabetes on Ramadan Fasting," *Plos One* 17, no. 3 (2022): 1–18.

⁶ Sanobia Yousuf, Alvina Syed, and Muhammad Yakoob Ahmedani, "To Explore the Association of Ramadan Fasting with Symptoms of Depression, Anxiety, and Stress in People with Diabetes," *Diabetes Research and Clinical Practice* 172 (2021): 108545.

help this study understand the inner atmosphere of the text at the time of the revelation of Q 2:183-5. The inner atmosphere of the text is a crucial aspect of understanding its emphasis because the spirit of the text is conveyed through the emphasis of its language. Therefore, new efforts are needed to approach Q 2:183-5 using a semantic approach that seeks to elaborate the interpretation of the Qur'an by considering its linguistic characteristics.

The aim of this research is to analyze Q 2:183-5 with a semantic approach. Semantic analysis involves examining the meaning and significance of the verse through a comprehensive framework. This begins by considering the textual context, identifying key terms, and analyzing their linguistic features and grammatical structure. The situational context is then explored, including the historical, cultural, and contextual factors surrounding the revelation of the verse. Syntagmatic analysis examines the internal structure of verses, including rhetorical devices and syntactic functions. Paradigmatic analysis broadens its scope by exploring related concepts and theological implications. Finally, fusion horizon analysis connects the verse's timeless message with its contemporary relevance and practical implications. Consulting reputable commentaries and involving knowledgeable experts are essential during the analysis process. Overall, semantic analysis involves a careful study of the verse's textual and situational context, analyzing its linguistic and syntactic features, exploring related concepts, and considering its current relevance.⁸ By following this framework and consulting reliable sources, a deeper understanding of the meaning and implications of the verse can be achieved.

Methods

Semantics is the study of the meaning of a language.⁹ The semantics of the Quran is the study of the meaning of the language used by the Quran. The language of the Quran is a difficult topic to discuss because it is different from the Bible. The language of the Quran is the language of God which has not undergone the slightest reduction. At

⁷ Idris Tuzun and Umut Yucel Cavus, "Investigation of the Effects of Ramadan and Intermittent Fasting on Material and Spiritual Health," *The Intercontinental Journal of Internal Medicine* 2, no. 1 (2024): 21–25.

⁸ Ahmad Ismail and Ahmad Solahuddin, "Psychology of Patience and Semantic Approach to the Qur'an: Meaning of Qala on Istirja' Verse," *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 10, no. 1 (2023): 1-11.

⁹ John Lyons, *Linguistic Semantics: An Introduction* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

the same time, many academics claim that the Bible is not God's language. However, the apostles in the next era wrote the Bible. This is an epistemological problem arising out of differences in the paradigm of canonization of the Quran as a holy book.

Since the Quran is understood as the language of God absolutely, there is no discussion of inerrancy and infallibility in the Quran.¹⁰ Everyone believes that the language of the Quran must be inerrant because everyone knows that God is never wrong in choosing words, language style, grammatical, and all the linguistic features of the Quran.¹¹ In some cases, although there is a discussion of the Quran as a cultural product (*intaj saqafi*), but the discussion ends at the same conclusion: The language of the Quran is absolutely the language of God. Quran as a cultural product is nothing more than an attempt to arouse the reader of the Quran to cultural awareness during the revelation of the Quran. Since God borrowed Arabic to convey His words, understanding the meaning of the Quran must use a language approach. Meanwhile, the approach of language that has attention to meaning is semantic. Therefore, the Quran must be interpreted through a semantic approach.

This study would interpret Q 2: 183-5 using a semantics approach. We believe that understanding the first recipient of the Quran, as understood by the Companions of the Prophet, is not the sacred meaning of the Quran but the understanding according to the horizon of time and space. We argue that the understanding of the Quran goes on. It should not be confined by a certain time and space as a group of Muslims understands it. We also believe that, although we devote our might to understanding the Quran, this understanding does not mean the meaning of the Quran. The meaning of the Quran is sacred, while understanding is profane. However, even if it is profane, we have the right to understand the Quran within our means because God commands us to read and understand the Quran, not to achieve its sacred meaning. Based on these assumptions, the study would seek to understand Q 2: 183-5 independently.

We would analyze Q 2: 183-5 using a structural approach. This analysis examines the correlation between verses before and after Q 2: 183-5. This analysis is an analysis of the intrinsic elements of the Quran that refer to the textual context (*shiyak lafzi*). After structural analysis, we would analyze the *asbab nuzul* of Q 2: 183-5. This analysis

¹⁰ Ahmad Hasan, "The Concept of Infallibility in Islam," *Islamic Studies* 11, no. 1 (1972): 1–11.

¹¹ Muhammad Zamir Syahmi Zainudin and Thameem Ushama, "The Concept of Papal Infallibility in Christianity and 'Ismah (Sinlessness) in Islam: A Comparative Study," *Journal of Islam in Asia (E-ISSN 2289-8077)* 19, no. 2 (2022): 263–294.

examines the inner mood of the first recipients of the Quran during the revelation. This step analyzes the extrinsic elements of the Quran that refer to the situational context (*shiyak nuzuli*).¹² However, this is not a determinant of meaning but a supporting instrument for understanding the Quran. In addition, this study only uses the micro-context of the Quran or *asbab nuzul*, which records the situational context of the verse particularly. This study does not use a macro context approach that seeks to capture the psychology of the masses when the Quran descends. The macro-contexts are totalitarian, speculative, coercive, and approximate. Thus, the approach used in this study is a situational context approach to examine the inner mood of the first recipients of the Quran.¹³

Next, we seek to integrate the Quran's intrinsic and extrinsic elements. We call it the fusion of textual context and situational context. This analysis aims to lead the reader to the inner mood of the Quran. However, the inner mood is not the spirit of Q 2: 183-5. Then, Q 2:183-5 should be analyzed Syntagmatically and paradigmatically. Syntagmatic analysis examines the correlation of words in the verse, while paradigmatic analysis is an archaeological approach to language that aims to examine the historical meaning of a word.¹⁴ The purpose of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic analysis is to capture the emphasis of language, in which Allah entrusts the meaning of the Quran behind the emphasis. Finally, the task of the present recipient is to make the meaning of the past the capital to determine the meaning of the present. This construct of meaning is actually to be achieved in the effort to interpret the Quran. The integration of these two constructs is the spirit of the Quran that should be actualized for infinite time and space.¹⁵

Results and Discussion

Many Islamic scholars agree that Q 2: 183-5 was revealed on Ramadan 2 H., or in the spring of February to March 624 AD. The revelation of Q 2: 183-5 indicates the marked obligation of Muslims to observe the fast of Ramadan for the first whole month for the first time. Even then, Muslims suffered because of a turbulent political situation

¹² Lukman Abdul Motalib, et al., "Scientific Exegesis of al-Quran and Its Relevance in Dealing with Contemporary Issues: An Appraisal on the Book of 'al-Jawahir fi Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim," *International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering* 8, no. 2 (2019): 575–581.

¹³ Wely Dozan and Muhammad Turmudzi, "The Concept of Hermeneutics as a Methodology for Interpreting the Text of the Quran," *Hunafa: Jurnal Studia Islamika* 18, no. 2 (2021): 241–261.

¹⁴ Ferdinand De Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (Columbia: John Wiley & Sons, 2017).

and began to fight frequent wars. Internally in Medina, Muslims got resistance from Qainuqa Jews because Muhammad could not be made a puppet leader and instead became affiliated with Aus-Khazraj. Meanwhile, Muslims also had a bad relationship with the polytheists of Mecca because they migrated to Medina due to their bad treatment. Through these conditions, Muslims were granted permission to fight by lowering Q 22:39-40 after more than ten years of persecution. Thus, Q 2: 183-5 revealed that during a turbulent political situation, the Muslims began to fight frequent wars.

Exactly on 17 Ramadan 2 H./March 13, 624 AD, the Muslims won the battle of Badr against the polytheists of Makkah, their mortal enemy.¹⁶ This Ramadan, they have to fast for the first time. The number of Islamic troops was only 300, while his opponent, the polytheist Makkah, numbered 1000s of people.¹⁷ Before this battle raged, from the end of 1 H/623 AD to the beginning of 2 H/624 AD, the Muslims and polytheists of Mecca were involved in two small-scale armed conflicts. The Battle of Badr was the first large-scale battle fought between the Muslims and the polytheists of Mecca.¹⁸ This battle was meaningful for the early Muslims because it was the first proof that they actually had a chance to defeat their enemy in Mecca. This victory showed the other Arab tribes that a new force had risen. This victory strengthened Muhammad as a leader over various groups of people in Medina who had previously often fought. Through this victory, various Arab tribes converted to Islam and established alliances with the Muslims in Medina. Thus, the expansion of Islam began.

Ya ayyuhallazina amanu kutiba 'alaikum siyamu kama kutiba 'alallazina ming qablikum la'allakum tattaqun. (al-Baqarah 2: 183). O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint.

Fasting in Arabic is mentioned using the word *siyam* or *saum*, which is both taken from the word *sama* which means to restrain.¹⁹ Whereas in Islamic sharia

¹⁵ David Vessey, "Gadamer and the Fusion of Horizons," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17, no. 4 (2009): 531–542.

¹⁶ Sohail Akhtar, Naseem Akhter, and Yasir Munir, "The Outstanding Military Command of Prophet Muhammad PBUH and Role of his War Strategies & Tactics in the Success of Early Islamic Expeditions (Historical Analysis)," *Al-Azva* 36, no. 56 (2021): 13–26.

¹⁷ Joseph S. Spoerl, "The Aim of Warfare in al-Waqidi's Kitab al-Maghazi," *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 11, no. 3 (2020): 213–228.

¹⁸ Joel Hayward, "Justice, Jihad and Duty: The Quranic Concept of Armed Conflict," *ICR Journal* 9, no. 3 (2018): 267–303.

¹⁹ Abu Bakar Ahmad bin Ali ar Razial al-Jashash, *Ahkam Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2020).

terminology, *siyam* is a vocabulary for the act of avoiding eating, drinking, and intercourse in a certain period to live in order or draw closer to Allah. The word *siyam* is repeated Nine times in the Quran, namely in Q 2: 183, 187 (twice), 196 (twice), 4: 92, 5: 89, 95 and 58: 4, while the word *saum* is only mentioned once in the in Surah Maryam (19): 26. All the words *siyam* in the Quran indicate the meaning of fasting in sharia terminology, while the word *saum* does not indicate the meaning of fasting, but refrains from speaking.

When Muhammad arrived in Medina for the first time, on Monday, 12 Rabiul Awwal 1 H/September 27, 622 AD, Muslims were fasting. However, this fasting is performed for three days in each month coupled with the fasting of Asyura' (10 Muharram). From an Islamic perspective, this model of fasting is the fast that was obligatory for the early people, from Adam to Isa. However, historical research does not confirm this because the religions before Islam had a different way of fasting. Apart from the discussion regarding the fasting model of other religions, which is clear, the model of fasting three days every month coupled with the fasting of Asyura' was done by Muslims when they first came to Medina. Next, after 19 months of undergoing this fasting model, in Ramadan 2 H/622 AD., the fasting ritual was changed to fasting Ramadhan for a whole month through lowering Q 2: 183.²⁸²⁹

Q 2: 183 orders to fast using the word *K-T-B* in passive form (*kutiba*), which means prescribed. The passive form of *kutiba* is repeated 13 times, more than the *kataba*, as the active form, is repeated only eight times. *Kutiba* verses are mentioned to affirm the legal obligations of sharia, among which are *qisas* (2: 178), the division of inheritance (2: 180), fasting (2: 183 twice), war (2: 216, 246; 3: 104, 4: 77), and the living of the Wife

²⁰ Al-Samin, *Al-Durr Al-Masun fi 'Ulum Al-Kitab Al-Maknun*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2019).

²¹ Ibn Atiyyah, *Al-Muharrar Al-Wajiz fi Tafsir Al-Kitab Al-Aziz*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2020).

²² Abu al-Hayyan Al-Andalusi, *Al-Bahr Al-Muhit*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2020), Ibn Kasir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Azim*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2020).

²³ Abu Saud, *Irsyad Al-Aql Al-Salim Ila Mazaya Al-Kitab Al-Karim*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2020).

²⁴ Al-Alusi, *Ruh Al-Ma'ani fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Azim Wa Al-Sab' Al-Masani*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2020).

²⁵ Al-Baghawi, *Ma'alim Al-Tanzil*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2020).

²⁶ Muhammad Abduh, *Al-Manar*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2020).

²⁷ Ibn Jauzi, *Zad Al-Masir Fi Ilm Al-Tafsir*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2020).

²⁸ Ibn Abi Hatim, *Tafsir Ibn Abi Hatim*. 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2019).

²⁹ Jalal al-Din Al-Suyuti, *Al-Durr Al-Mansur Fi Tafsir Bi Al-Ma'sur* (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2021).

(4: 127); while the other three are for eschatological issues regarding the reward of charity (Q 9: 120-21 and 22: 4). As for all *kataba verses*, the subject is God, except in 58:22, the subject is believers who oblige themselves to have faith (2: 187, 5: 21, 6: 21, 54, 9: 51, 58: 21, 59: 3). Through seven *kataba verses*, Allah allows intercourse with women on the eve of the month of Ramadan (2:187), Allah gives orders to the House of Israel to enter the promised land (5:21), Allah obliges Himself to be a loving God (6:21, 54, 59:3), and calamity does not hit the believers unless it is ordained by Allah (9:51 and 58: 21).

‘Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you’ (*kutiba’ alaikum siyamu kama kutiba’ alallazina ming qablikum*). According to Tahir Ibn Asyur, Q 2: 183 shows that fasting is essential to worship, so Muslims should pay excessive attention to this ritual.³⁰ In addition, this verse also compares the fasting for Muslims with the fasting for previous people, Jews and Christians, aiming that Muslims do not feel heavy because people of other religions also receive the same demands.³¹ Thus, this sentence is in the form of a composition with a motivational purpose so that Muslims do not feel heavy with the observance of fasting because fasting is essential to worship for Muslims.

Ayyamam ma’dudat, fa man kana minkum maridan au ‘ala safarin fa ‘iddatum min ayyamin ukhar, wa ‘alallazina yutiqunahu fidyatun ta’amu miskin, fa man tatawwa’ a khairan fa huwa khairul lah, wa an tasumu khairul lakum ing kuntum ta’lamun. (al-Baqarah 2: 184). (Fasting) for a fixed number of days; but if any of you is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed number (Should be made up) from days later. For those who can do it (With hardship), is a ransom, the feeding of one that is indigent. But he that would give more, of his own free will, it is better for him. And it is better for you that ye fast, if ye only knew.

Ayyamam ma’dudat (for a fixed number of days) is not a new sentence but an adverb of time for the previous verses. In this case, one verse of the Quran does not mean one sentence; sometimes, one sentence consists of several verses, and sometimes several

³⁰ Al Tahir Ibn Asyur. *Al-Tahrir Wa Al-Tanwir*. 2nd ed. Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2021..

³¹ Kurdi Fadal, “The Qur’an and Inter-Religious Relation Models in Contemporary World,” *Jurnal Theologia* 31, no. 2 (2021): 185–206.

sentences are contained in one verse.³² Thus, this verse explains that Ramadhan fasting is carried out for a month, during which the days have been fixed.

Fa man kana minkum maridan au' ala safarin fa 'iddatum min ayyamin ukhar (but if any of you is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed number (Should be made up) from days later). This verse explains the waiver not to fast for Muslims who cannot fast: if he is sick or travelling during Ramadan, he may not fast and replace it another day. If he cannot perform it on another day, he pays *fidyah*, feeding the poor (*fidyatun ta'amu miskin*). Despite waivers, Islamic scholars have different opinions. According to Ibn Sirin, if he is sick, he may not fast, even if it only hurts from a small scratch on the hand. The majority of Islamic scholars oppose this opinion. The pain that allows one not to fast is a pain whose condition worsens during fasting. As for travelling, according to Ibn Abbas and Ibn Umar, it is better not to fast when travelling. At same time, according to Ahmad b. Hanbal, fasting is *makruh* during travelling. However, this opinion was opposed by al-Shaafi'i and Malik. According to them, if travel is not tiring, it should not cancel the fast (*iftar*). Cancelling the fast is allowed for people who cannot afford to fast while travelling; as long as he is still capable, he is also obliged to fast.³³

According to Ibn Kasir, quoting histories from Ibn Mas'ud, Ibn Abbss, Mujahid, Tawus, and Muqatil b. Hayyan, people who do not travel or are sick may choose to fast or not fast.³⁴ If he does not fast, he must fast another day or pay *fidyah*. Whoever pays *fidyah* beyond the prescribed amount, then it is better (*fa man tatawwa'a khairan fa huwa khairul lah*). Although controversial, Ibn Kasir was so convinced of this history that he repeated it several times. Thus, the phrase *fa man kana minkum maridan au' ala safarin fa 'iddatum min ayyamin ukhar* does not explain the relief of not fasting, but indeed from the beginning of fasting is carried out lightly, it is okay to fast, it can not be. It's just that, according to Ibn Kasir, Q 2:183-4 was later deleted with Q 2:185, which explains that only those who travel and are sick should not fast and should fast on another day. Thus, Q 2: 185 was derived not with Q 2: 183-4 but after.

The mistake of many Islamic commentators and scholars is that they rarely discuss the redaction of *wa an tasumu khairul lakum ing kuntum ta'lamun* (and it is better for you that ye fast, if ye only knew). The number of academics didn't elaborate

³² Meraj Ahmad, "Literary Miracle of the Quran," *Ar-Raniry: International Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 1 (2020): 205-220.

³³ Atiyyah, *Al-Muharrar Al-Wajiz Fi Tafsir Al-Kitab Al-Aziz*.

³⁴ Ibn Kasir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Azim*. 1st ed. Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2020.

seriously; they eventually disagreed on the waivers of not fasting. This phrase begins with *waw atf*, which connects with the previous phrase regarding the waiver of not fasting.³⁵ It is indeed okay not to fast for the travelling and sick. However, this phrase warns that fasting is better than not fasting. If only they knew, but in reality they didn't want to know. Many Islamic scholars make it easier for the law not to fast because they break this phrase with the previous phrase. The disconnection convinced them that this phrase was mentioned to give relief not to fast, but on the contrary, this verse was passed down to give fasting orders for Muslims at war. If those who are at war alone are obliged to fast, let alone those who are just travelling or sick. In fact, at the end of the war, although the Muslims won, Muhammad warned that the Muslims had just defeated a small enemy, namely the polytheists of Quraysh, and after this, they would fight a great enemy, namely desire.³⁶ The editorial corroborates the thesis that Muslims were fasting at that time because they were fighting desire. Muhammad's warning is for Muslims to pay more attention to their fasting.

Shahru ramadanallazi unzila fihil-qur'anu hudal lin-nasi wa bayyinatim minal-huda wal-furqan, fa man syahida mingkumusy-syakra falyasum-h, wa man kana maridan au 'ala safarin fa 'iddatum min ayyamin ukhar, yuridullahu bikumul-yusra wa la yuridu bikumul-'usra wa litukmilul-'iddata wa litukabbirullahu 'ala ma hadakum wa la'allakum tasykurun. (al-Baqarah 2: 185). Ramadhan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur'an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (Between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting, but if any one is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (Should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful.

Shahru ramadanallazi unzila fihil-qur'anu hudal lin-nasi wa bayyinatim minal-huda wal-furqan (Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur'an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (right Between and wrong). This phrase explains that the Quran was revealed during the month of Ramadan. Ibn Hisham narrated that this verse was revealed on 17 Ramadan 2 H., while the Muslims

³⁵ Ahmad Ismail, "The Meaning of Kutiba in the Ramadan Fasting Verse: Semantic Approach," *Alfaz (Arabic Literatures for Academic Zealots)* 10, no. 1 (2022): 39–51.

³⁶ Ron E. Hassner, "War and the Religious Calendar," *APSA 2010 Annual Meeting Paper* (2010): 1–38.

had just won the war.³⁷ When he heard this verse from Gabriel, Muhammad remembered the first revelation of the Quran in the cave of *Hira'* during Ramadan/August 19, 610 AD. Muhammad recalled Muslim's struggle during the polytheists of Makkah persecuted them. On this day, Muslims triumphed against the polytheists of Makkah, who discriminated against them until they were exiled to Medina.³⁸

Ramadan is mentioned several times in the Quran, but only once is it mentioned straightforwardly, namely in Q 2: 185.³⁹ However, the other verses are not straightforward. Ramadan, the ninth month in the Arabic calendar, was not yet known before Islam. Meanwhile, the jahiliyyah Arabs knew it as the month of Natiq.⁴⁰ Thus, Ramadan is a new month established by Islam. Lexically, Ramadan is taken from the word *ramada*, which means to burn, because of the nature of the month that burns the desire and sins of people fasting. Therefore, the revelation of Q 2:185 ordered to fast and gave a new name to the ninth month in the Tradition of the Arabic calendar.⁴¹

Fa man shahida mingkumusy-shahra falyasum-h (So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting). This phrase explains that when entering the month of Ramadan, then Muslims are ordered to fast; only, due to traveling or sick, they are permissible not to fast, *wa man kana maridan aw 'ala safarin fa 'iddatum min ayyamin ukhar* (but if any one is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (Should be made up) by days later). This phrase repeats the previous phrase in Q 2:184 regarding the waiver permissible not to fast (*fa man kana minkum maridan au' ala safarin fa 'iddatum min ayyamin ukhar*).⁴² As for healthy people and not traveling, it is mandatory to fast. Ibn Katsir explained earlier that according to early-period Islamic

³⁷ Abd Wahid, et al., "Hermeneutical Analysis of Hadith Concerning the Necessity of Having the Husband's Permission in the Implementation of Sunnah Fasting for the Wife," *Journal of Positive School Psychology* 7, no. 4 (2023): 355–366.

³⁸ Laily Salsabila and Moh Abdul Kholiq Hasan, "Ifitiradi Mahmud Yunus's Interpretation of the Phenomenon of Fasting at the Poles in Surah al-Baqarah: 183—185," *Tanzil: Jurnal Studi Al-Quran* 6, no. 2 (2024): 167–188.

³⁹ Ahmad Razak, Muflih Lukman, and Ahmad Yasser Mansyur, "The Muslim Communities Forgiveness Effect in Ramadan Month," *3rd International Conference on Education, Science, and Technology (ICEST 2019)* 481 (2020): 115-120.

⁴⁰ Abu al-Hayyan Al-Andalusi. *Al-Bahr Al-Muhit*. 2nd ed. Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2020.

⁴¹ Muhammad Nurkhanif, "Hermeneutics and Deconstruction of Hilal Testimony Verse: Critical View on QS. al-Baqarah 185," *Ulul Albab* 21, no. 1 (2020): 67-85.

⁴² Ahmed Kassem and Nada Sharaan, "Semiotic Analysis of the Quran," *Linguistics and Translation* (2022): 1–26.

scholars, Q 2:185 was revealed after Q 2:183-4. The revelation of Q 2:185 is to affirm that those who should not fast are only the sick or traveling.⁴³

Hadith, narrated by al-Bukhari, confirmed that the prophet migrated from Medina to Makkah in the month of Ramadan in a fasting state. On the way, when entering the area of ‘Asfan, the prophet raised his hand and then drank water so that everyone would know that he was canceling the fast.⁴⁴ In another hadith, narrated by Malik, once some companions traveled with the prophet in the month of Ramadan. On the way, some companions fast, and some do not. Each does not denounce the other.⁴⁵ Moreover, based on the hadith narrated by Muslims, almost ten days of companions fighting alongside the prophet in the month of Ramadan. Some companions fast, and some do not. Each does not denounce the other.⁴⁶ Thus, some of these hadiths explain that sickness, traveling, or war is an obstacle that causes people not to fast. However, it does not mean that they should not fast. They can choose to fast or not. Refer to the phrase *wa an tasumu khairul lakum ing kuntum ta’lamun* (and it is better for you that ye fast, if ye only knew), fasting is better than not fasting.

And it is better for you that ye fast gives information that fasting is better for you. As for the opposite statement, it’s terrible for you if you don’t fast. *If ye only knew* means that you would fast if you know that fasting is essential. Unfortunately, when reading this phrase, some people do not know and do not want to know, so they think that this verse does not emphasize the importance of fasting. They believe otherwise that this verse emphasizes the importance of not fasting when traveling. This study argues differently from most of these people, who read the phrase *wa an tasumu khairul lakum ing kuntum ta’lamun* “relaxed.” In contrast, according to this study, this phrase emphasizes the importance of fasting, not the importance of not fasting.

Another hadith explained that “*fasting is for Me (God).*” As for what is meant by the editorial of the hadith, fasting is not for man but for God. The consequence of this interpretation is that if a person fasts for health, then God must give them health. It’s just that fasting is not for health but for God. Because of fasting for God, God would give anything for people to fast, not limited to body health. Thus, the hadith affirms the phrase

⁴³ Ade Jamarudin, et al., “Implementing Religious Moderation Using the Perspective of the Qur’an,” *KnE Social Sciences* (2022) 579–590.

⁴⁴ Al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jami’ Li Ahkam Al-Qur’n*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2021).

⁴⁵ Al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jami’ Li Ahkam Al-Qur’n*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2021).

⁴⁶ Al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jami’ Li Ahkam Al-Qur’n*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2021).

wa an tasumu khairul lakum ing kuntum ta'lamun, that fasting is an essential worship because fasting is for Allah, not others. The first recipients of the Quran (the Companions) knew the inner situation of the passing down of this verse. Therefore, they continued to fast even though they were at war (Badar). The First recipients knew that fasting was challenging, so they were serious about fasting.

The above phrase is then continued with the phrase *yuridullahu bikumul-yusra wa la yuridu bikumul-'usra* (Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put to difficulties). The point is that people who are sick or on the road should not fast because God wants to give them waivers so that they do not find it challenging to live the religion. All interpreters interpret it as such, whereas this verse is supposed to be connected with the next phrase and contrasted with Q 2:184.⁴⁷ When connected with the phrase *wa litukmilul-'iddata* (–He wants you– to complete the prescribed period), the interpretation becomes “though it may not fast, it must fast another day.” This shows the importance of fasting so that it should not be abandoned because God gives ease behind fasting, not difficulties.

“Allah intends every facility for you” Allah wants to give lightness to you, which means fasting feels light because it is done together in the month of Ramadan. In addition, fasting feels light because followers of the previous religion also fasted, namely Jews, Christians, etc. “He does not want to put to difficulties,” Allah does not want you to undergo a heavy fast because you have to fast outside the month of Ramadan. After all, you have to observe the imperfect fast of Ramadhan.⁴⁸

Wa litukabbirullaha 'ala ma hadakum wa la'allakum tasykurun (to glorify Him in that He has guided you, and perchance ye shall be grateful), glorify Allah for what He shows you, who knows you are a grateful person. This phrase gives information that only a thankful person who performs obligations evenly, without being tempted.⁴⁹ On the contrary, people who are not thankful for would not fast. Allah knows that the commandment follows the governed capacity, so fasting is not heavy. Thus, the fasting

⁴⁷ Ahmad Bukhari Muslim, Rodhy Harisca, and Ahmad Basyori, “The Impact of Arabic Literacy on Understanding Quranic Verses,” *KnE Social Science* (2024): 564–578.

⁴⁸ Abdul Basid, “I'tikaf Therapy as an Effort to Prevent Terrorism: A Study of al-Qurtubi's Interpretation of QS. al-Baqarah: 187,” *Al-Quds: Jurnal Studi Alquran dan Hadis* 6, no. 3 (2022): 947–964.

⁴⁹ Farhan, “The Essence of Ramadan Fasting in Perspective Sufism (Tafsir QS. al-Baqarah: 183),” *Juristira (Jurnal Ilmiah Studi Islam dan Humaniora)* 1, no. 1 (2024): 37–47.

verse should be taken seriously because it informs the importance of fasting. The previous interpreters' fault understood fasting as not serious, even trivial.⁵⁰

This research found that Q 2:183-5 emphasizes the importance of fasting, even when traveling or sick, which can be seen from the choice of linguistic features. However, this finding contradicts the narrative constructed by previous scholars, such as Ibn Sirin and Dawud al-Zahiri, who often underestimated fasting because Q 2:184 mentioned relief from fasting for people who were sick or traveling.⁵¹ Meanwhile, scholars from health disciplines dedicate themselves to studying the Ramadan fast, which lasts 13 to 18 hours per day in summer and may be shorter in winter or tropical areas. Based on research on 113 articles written from 1960 to 2009, fasting is good for health because glucose homeostasis is maintained by food consumed before sahur and liver glycogen storage during fasting. In general, fasting does not have a negative impact on the heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, eyes, hematological profile, endocrine, and neuropsychiatric functions.⁵²

So, does that mean people have to continue fasting even when they are sick or traveling? Of course not, they are still allowed not to fast as long as they have consulted a doctor. Mohamed Hassanein, Adel A El-Sayed, Khaled Tayeb, MAK Omar, and Abdul Basit emphasized the importance of creating harmony between medical and religious advice to encourage safe fasting practices, especially for those suffering from diabetes.⁵³ Hala S El-Wakil, Iman Desoky, Nashaat Lotfy, and Ahmed G Adam found that diabetic chronic kidney disease (CKD) patients need to be closely monitored during Ramadan fasting because sometimes Ramadan fasting can damage the kidney tubules.⁵⁴

Research by Jamal Al Wakeel, Ahmed H. Mitwalli, Abdulkareem Alsuwaida, Mohammad Al Ghonaim, Saira Usama, Ashik Hayat, and Iqbal Hamid Shah found that

⁵⁰ Budi Kisworo and H Hardivizon, "Telaah Leksikal, Gramatikal, dan Kontekstual Terhadap Makna Kata Syahida pada QS. Al-Baqarah Ayat 185," *Al-Quds: Jurnal Studi Alquran dan Hadis* 4, no. 1 (2020): 163-180.

⁵¹ Salman Abdul Muthalib, Furqan Furqan, and Oka Ridayani, "Pemahaman Masyarakat Gampong Lapang Kabupaten Aceh Barat Terhadap Qada dan Fidiyah Puasa dalam al-Qur'an," *Tafse: Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 7, no. 2 (2022): 244-260.

⁵² Sufyan Hussain, et al., "Fasting with Adrenal Insufficiency: Practical Guidance for Healthcare Professionals Managing Patients on Steroids during Ramadan," *Clinical Endocrinology* 93, no. 2 (2020): 87-96.

⁵³ Mohamed Hassanein, et al., "Diabetes and Ramadan: A Medico-Religious Perspective," in *Diabetes and Ramadan Practical Guidelines: Map of Contributor Nationalities and Country Affiliations* (2016): 53-61.

⁵⁴ Hala S. El-Wakil, et al., "Fasting the Month of Ramadan by Muslims: Could It Be Injurious to Their Kidneys?," *Saudi Journal of Kidney Diseases and Transplantation* 18, no. 3 (2007): 349-354.

stable diabetes patients can fast safely during Ramadan provided they strictly adhere to their medical regimen and are closely monitored to maintain fluid and electrolyte balance.⁵⁵ According to Salem A. Beshyah, Muhammad Hamed Farooqi, Mohamed Farghaly, Salah Abusnana, and Juma M. Al Kaabi, doctors have an important role in advising patients about whether they should fast during Ramadan and in supporting diabetes patients who choose to fast. Thus, fasting is an important act of worship, but under certain conditions, its implementation requires further consultation with a doctor.⁵⁶

This research also found that fasting is not a new practice, as it was observed by earlier communities as well. According to Suliman Bashear, based on oral evidence circulating in Islamic sources, the Prophet and Muslims fasted when they first came to Medina, and the Prophet often had dialogue with Jews about fasting ashura.⁵⁷ Additionally, the Quraysh tribe also had a tradition of fasting ashura. Furthermore, according to Bashear, ashura fasting is a Judeo-Christian heritage. Slightly different from Bashear, Georges Vajda noted that, although not explicitly connected with Judaism, classical Islam recognized the practice of fasting on Mondays and Thursdays as originating from Jewish tradition. Abu Huraira mentioned that the Prophet Muhammad supported this practice on the grounds that he liked his good deeds to be done while fasting. The Monday-Thursday-Monday fasting pattern is also known in the Judaic tradition.⁵⁸

This shows that fasting in the Islamic tradition was ordered during the era of Judeo-Christian heritage. This does not mean that Ramadan fasting is a Judeo-Christian heritage, but rather that there are similarities. Mohammad Akram highlights the similarities and differences in fasting practices in the three Semitic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In these religions, fasting is a ritual to commemorate important events and an individual's expression of gratitude or regret to God.⁵⁹ Fasting is a form of

⁵⁵ Jamal al Wakeel, et al., "Recommendations for Fasting in Ramadan for Patients on Peritoneal Dialysis," *Peritoneal Dialysis International* 33, no. 1 (2013): 86–91.

⁵⁶ Salem Beshyah, et al., "Management of Diabetes during Ramadan Fasting: A Comprehensive Survey of Physicians' Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices," *Ibnosina Journal of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences* 9, no. 2 (2017): 28–36;

Fatheyah Alawadi, et al., "Emirates Diabetes Society Consensus Guidelines for the Management of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus–2020," *Dubai Diabetes Endocrino Journal* 26, no. 1 (2020): 1–20.

⁵⁷ Suliman Bashear, "Ashura: An Early Muslim Fast," *Zeitschrift Der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 141, no. 2 (1991): 281–316.

⁵⁸ Georges Vajda, *Fasting in Islam and Judaism*, (New York: Routledge, 2017).

⁵⁹ Muhammad Akram, "Meaning and Significance of Fasting in Comparative Perspective," *Hamdard Islamicus* 39, no. 2 (2016): 37–60.

asceticism that aims to increase self-control, invoke God's mercy and sympathy, overcome inner fears and emotional weaknesses, and lead to deeper self-affirmation and greater social integration. Ramadan fasting remains an authentic and original practice in the Islamic tradition because it is mentioned in Q 2:183-5.

Despite these contradictions, Ibn al-‘Arabi (d. 1240) had his own interpretation regarding fasting and starvation as it appears in chapters 106 and 107 of *al-Futuhat al-Makkiyya*. According to Ibn al-‘Arabi, 'sought hunger' (*al-ju' al-matlub*) is voluntary hunger, namely a body condition that is deliberately maintained only at the level that is really needed, without excess. This allows for inner calm because there is no excessive movement to meet needs. More importantly, this fasting is related to realizing or participating in the nature of God's 'eternal self-reliance' (*samadaniyya*), which is free from want and need. This is because fasting is the only form of worship that shows sincerity hidden from the eyes of others. Therefore, the essence of fasting provides protection from hypocrisy.⁶⁰

In the end, fasting is a spiritual discipline that aims to control desires, cultivate humility, perform good deeds, and train to control the tongue. In Greek tradition, fasting is usually equated with asceticism, which means "physical exercise." Fasting is called physical exercise because people who fast are spiritual athletes who train their spirituality in a disciplined manner.⁶¹ Nowadays, fasting is often interpreted as "refraining" from eating, drinking, and anything that breaks the fast for a certain period to practice self-control and spiritual discipline. Fasting is observed by world religions, including Ancient Greek, Persian, Buddhist, Jewish, and Christian traditions, in different ways, but the goal is the same.⁶² Likewise, Muslims are obliged to fast through the revelation of Q 2:183-5. Fasting should be a serious act of worship that is taken seriously, not taken lightly.

Conclusion

This research presented findings that differed from the general view of the ulama. Based on data collected and analyzed using a semantic approach to the Quran, it

⁶⁰ Atif Khalil, "White Death: Ibn al-‘Arabi on the Trials and Virtues of Hunger and Fasting," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 141, no. 3 (2021): 577-586.

⁶¹ Rkia Elaroui Cornell, "Ascetic Spirituality in Islam," *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Islamic Spirituality* (2022): 297-315.

⁶² Khaled Trabelsi, et al., "Religious Fasting and Its Impacts on Individual, Public, and Planetary Health: Fasting as a 'Religious Health Asset' for a Healthier, More Equitable, and Sustainable Society," *Frontiers in Nutrition* 9 (2022): 1-21.

concluded that fasting during Ramadan was a "crucial" act of worship that should not be taken lightly. However, many Islamic scholars, both classical and contemporary, underestimated the importance of fasting during Ramadan because it could be made up on another day or, if one was truly unable, replaced with *fidyah*. Some Islamic scholars considered the provisions for "making up on another day" and "*fidyah*" as "conveniences," even though this was not the case. Scholars fail to explain the conditional sentence in the phrase "*inkuntum ta'lamun*" as a *syarṭ* (antecedent) that does not require an answer (consequent). In fact, even though the consequent is not mentioned, it does not mean that it does not exist, but that its existence is understood. In our opinion, Q 2:184 can be explained as "*inkuntum ta'lamun, fasawmukum khairun lakum*." This style of language seems to belittle readers of the Quran who do not want to fast. If only you knew, then fasting would be good for you. However, scholars instead focus on looking for relief in fasting, rather than further examining the linguistic style and semantic structure of the verse. The language features used in Q 2:183-5 emphasize the importance of fasting; through fasting, Allah desires ease, not difficulty. These conveniences include physical health; if they fast, they will be healthy, but if they do not fast, they will get sick. Health is ease, while illness is difficulty. If only they knew, unfortunately, many people don't know and so they underestimate fasting. To show leniency in fasting, Q 2:183-5 uses a motivational language style by informing Muslims that fasting is mandatory for them and was also mandatory for previous communities, whether Jews, Christians, or even non-Abrahamic religions, such as the Ancient Greek religion and Buddhism. Based on oral evidence circulating in Islamic sources, the Quraysh tribe had a tradition of *ashura* fasting; according to other oral evidence, the *ashura* fast is of Judeo-Christian heritage. Therefore, the first recipients of the Quran did not find the obligation to fast strange. They carried out this command seriously, which is indicated by historical records that they fasted while fighting against the Meccan polytheists at the Battle of Badr. Future research could delve deeper into the linguistic and semantic analysis of Quranic verses to further elucidate the rhetorical devices and linguistic styles used to convey religious obligations. A comparative study of fasting practices across different religious traditions and historical periods could provide additional insights into how these practices influenced the early Islamic understanding of fasting. Additionally, exploring the oral traditions and historical contexts that shaped the initial reception of Quranic commands could shed light on how early Muslims interpreted

and implemented these directives. Finally, examining contemporary interpretations and practices of fasting within diverse Muslim communities could reveal how modern believers reconcile traditional teachings with current circumstances and challenges.

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Author Contributions Statement

The author was AI. AI was responsible for the design and implementation of the research, data analysis, and preparation of the article. He also contributed to reviewing and drafting the manuscript, ensuring the overall study reached the expected quality standards.

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