Ramadān etiquette at the time of opening the Fast

The holy month of Ramadān is a Divine banquet. He has invited His servants to this banquet and kept open His hand of giving and bestowing. We need to acquire maximum benefits from all the bounties laid out by the Most Generous One. According to the sermon in which the Holy Prophet (s), welcomed the month of Ramadān, he said that the days of Ramadān are the best of the days (compared to days of other months); its nights are the best of the nights and its hours are the best of the hours. Additionally, the reward of fasting is so great that in Prophetic Hadith, we are told that “Allah says, ‘Fasting is for Me, and I (alone) will compensate for it.’”

It has also come in Hadith that the Almighty frees a million souls from hellfire at the time of Ifṭār; and when the eve of Friday and the day of Friday enter, He frees a million souls every hour. Therefore fasting in the month of Ramadān undoubtedly carries a huge reward which is beyond our imagination.

A devout servant after fasting for the entire day in obedience to the command of his Lord and Master is eager to achieve these rewards. The foremost of these rewards is the acceptance of the fast by the Master. It is unlikely that the all-Merciful God will reject the efforts of a person who has fasted during month of Ramadān for the sole purpose of achieving His great pleasure. However, to achieve the rewards and His pleasure one needs to prepare for that moment when Divine bounties are being distributed. This is similar to preparing for the graduation day after working for a degree over several years. The Holy Ma’sūmin (a) have taught us certain etiquette (ādāb) at the time of Ifṭār, i.e. when we open our fast. Some of these etiquettes are elaborated here.

1. Give ṣadaqah (charity) and feed those who are fasting. It is said that charity wards off evil consequences. Having fasted the entire day, if there are any shortcomings in our efforts, the charity will help us purify our fast. Moreover it is also rewarding. Imam Ali al-Riḍā (a) advised, “One who gives charity of one loaf of bread to a destitute at the time of ifṭār, Allah forgives his sins, and records for him the reward of freeing a slave from the progeny of [Prophet] Ismā‘īl.” As for feeding those who are fasting there are numerous Hadiths that encourage this noble act. Imam Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (a) said, “When a believer feeds a (fellow) believer in Ramadān, Allah records for him the reward of freeing thirty believing slaves, and he has with Allah a prayer that is answered.”

2. Precede prayers over ifṭār. Where possible say your prayers (i.e. Maghrib ṣalāt and its nāfilah) before opening your fast. Of course, if someone cannot extend the fast beyond Maghrib time on account of feeling hunger, thirst, and tiredness then it is better to

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2. Shahrullāh p. 19
3. Shaykh al-Mufid, Al-Amaali, p.219
4. Mafātih, p.320
5. Shahrullāh p. 175
6. Mafātih, p. 320
7. Rayshahrī mentions in Shahrullāh... (pp. 172 & 173) that one should hasten to open the fast (ta‘jil al-ifṭār).
8. Some scholars have suggested opening fasts after ‘Ishā ṣalāt, presumably when one combines the two prayers. See Islamic Laws of Ayt Sayyid Ali Seestani and Mafātihul, p. 319.
open the fast and then say prayers. The same is the case if others (e.g. family members) are waiting for you to open the fast first, then you should not delay in doing iftar. [Mafatih p. 319] Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a) said, “Precede the salah over iftar; provided if you are with a community that begins with iftar, in that case then do not oppose them and join them in iftar. Otherwise, begin with salah because it is better (aithal) than iftar, and it is more beloved to me that your prayers are recorded whilst you are in the state of fasting.” [Shahrullah p. 173]

3. Do not say your prayers so fast that you no longer feel the pleasure of worshipping the Almighty at the end of the fasting day. The Holy Prophet (s) advised Muslims in his famous sermon welcoming Ramadan, “O people . . . your backs have been burdened on account of your sins and disobedience, so lighten them through lengthening your prostrations. And know that Allah, the Exalted, does not punish those who say their prayers (well) and prostrate (for long).”

4. Do not forsake naflah prayers in Ramadan, especially the naflah after Maghrib and ‘Ishah salah. So important are the naflah prayers after the Maghrib that in a Hadith from Imam al-Ṣadiq (a) we have been advised not to abandon them whilst traveling and when at home. As for the naflah of ‘Ishah, Imam Ja’far al-Ṣadiq (a) has said that whoever performs this prayer and dies that night, he will be included amongst those who performed salah of witr in the last part of the night. In the sermon of Ramadan, the Prophet said, “One who performs a recommended prayer [in Ramadan] an acquisition from the hellfire is written for him.”

Question: If I’m attending jamah (congregational) prayers in a masjid/center where attendants are not given enough time between Maghrib and ‘Ishah to say the naflah, then what is the best course of action?
Answer: You should say your ‘Ishah prayers in jamah with rest of the participants and say the missed naflah of Maghrib after ‘Ishah prayers with the intention of rajah (hoping that the Almighty will accept your prayers said a little late). In a Hadith, Angel Jibra’il said to the Prophet Muhammad (s), “The (first) takbir that a believer performs with the Imam (of congregational prayer) is better than performing 60,000 Hajj and ‘Umrah and better than 70,000 times what is in this world. For every rak’ah that a believer prays in congregation is better than 100,000 dinar (gold coins) given in charity to the poor. For every sajdah that a believer performs in congregational prayer is better than freeing 1,000 slaves.”

5. Open your fast with halal food. These are food items that are: free from any illegal or doubtful earning, are tahir (ritually pure) and if made from meat then the animal should have been slaughtered according to Islamic guidelines.

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9 It is unfortunate to see that a number of Islamic centers rush through Maghrib and ‘Ishah prayers so as to open the fast soon. We humbly suggest that lukewarm water and dates be made readily available at the time of Maghrib and thereafter for those who cannot wait to open the fast, instead of rushing through magribayn salah.
10 M J Mughniyyah, Fiqh al-Imam Ja’far al-Ṣadiq, 1:242
11 Academy for Learning Islam, salah of Tahjjud, p.11
12 S. M. Kazım Yazdi, Al-‘Urwah al-Wuthqā, 2:236, Manshūrat Maytham Tammār, Qum, 1428 AH
13 Mafatih, p. 320.
6. It is recommended to open your fast with dates, or something sweet & lukewarm water. Opening fast with ḥalāl dates increases the reward of one’s payers manifold.14 Imam al-Ṣādiq (a) has suggested that when a person breaks his fast with lukewarm water, it cleans his liver, washes away his sins from the heart, and strengthens one’s eyesight and eye-pupil.15

7. Recite Sūrat al-Qadr, i.e. chapter 97 of the Holy Qur’an. Imam Ali Zaynul ʿĀbidin (a) said, “One who recites inna anzalnāhu fī laylatil qadr at the time of opening and closing of fast, he is between these two occasions like the one who is stranded with his blood for the sake of Allah.”16

8. Plead to the Almighty for forgiveness. The Holy Prophet (s) advised in his sermon, “O people, your souls have been mortgaged by your deeds, so free them through your istighfār.” Having fasted for the entire day, this is the best time for us to plead for forgiveness. The Holy Prophet (s) has suggested following when taking the first morsel.

9. Recite some of the recommended Du‘ās. The Holy Prophet (s) said, “Supplication of a fasting person at the time of ifṭār is answered.”17 Following Du‘ās are from Mafātiḥ.

**REFERENCES**
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14 Ibid.
16 Shahrullāh p. 175
17 Shahrullāh p. 176