

The Night of the Fifteenth of Sha'baan (*Nisf Sha'baan*)

In the *Sunan* of Ibn Majah, it is narrated with a weak chain, on the authority of 'Ali that the Prophet, may blessings and peace of God be upon him, said the following:

If it is the night of the middle of Sha'baan, then enliven its night and fast its day, for in it, God descends to the heaven once the sun sets and says, "Is there anyone seeking forgiveness so that I can forgive him? Is there anyone seeking provision so that I can give him? Is there anyone tribulated that I can relieve his tribulation? Is there? Is there?" until the entrance of dawn.

There are many hadith on the benefits of the night of the fifteenth of Sha'baan, but scholars have differed upon their authenticity. Though many claimed that these hadith are weakly authenticated, Ibn Majah authenticated some and actually placed them in his rigorously authenticated hadith collection.

It is narrated that the *tabi'in* (the generation that directly followed the time of the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him) of Shaam used to glorify this night. Amongst them are Khalid b. Ma'dan, Makhul, Luqmaan b. 'Aamir, and others. They used to exert themselves in worship during this night. It was from them that people learned the benefit and the glorification of this night. On the other hand, the scholars of Hijaz differed with them and refused to acknowledge acts of glorification and worship that were performed specifically in observation of mid-Sha'baan. From among them are 'Ata' and Ibn Abi Mulayah. Abdu al-Rahman b. Zaid b. Aslam narrated the same from the jurists of the people of Medina, and it is also the opinion of the companions of Imam Malik and others. They all said glorifying this night was an innovation.

While the scholars of Shaam acknowledged enlivening mid-Sha'baan, they differed on the method of doing so. One opinion is that it is preferred to enliven it in the masjid in a congregation. Khalid b. Ma'dan, Luqmaan b. 'Aamir, and others used to put on their best clothes, perfume themselves with incense, put on kuhl, and spend the night in the masjid. Ishaq b. Rahwayh concurred with them and said "Establishing it in the masjid in congregation is not an innovation." This was narrated by Harb al-Karmaani in his *Masaai'l*. According to another opinion, however, it is disliked to congregate on that night in the masjid to pray, tell stories, and to supplicate, while it is not disliked for one to enliven that night with prayers by himself. This is the opinion of al-Awza'i, the imam of the people of Shaam, their jurist and scholar.

Based on the fact that there are valid differences of opinion between the scholars, no one should condemn another for enlivening this night or for not doing so. Those who choose to seek the benefit of mid-Sha'baan by enlivening its night and fasting its day are following the opinion of Imam al-Awza'i and others. As for those who choose not to do so, they are abiding by the opinion of Imam Malik and others. Hence, there is no blame on choosing to follow either opinion.

Actions recommended by some scholars to perform during this night

As mentioned previously, it is recommended to bring this night to life with prayers, seeking forgiveness, supplication, and remembrance of God, and to fast the day of the fifteenth of Sha'baan. Many scholars have said it is good to read the Qur'anic chapter *Yasin* three times during this night (which begins after sunset). The first reading should be done with the intention of asking for a long life; the second with the intention of protection from tribulation; and the third with the intention of being in need only of God and leaving reliance on people. After each time this chapter is read, it is recommended to read the following supplication:

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. O God, O Bestower upon Whom none can bestow, O Possessor of Sublimity and Honor, O Possessor of Might and Favor, there is no deity but You, Who subdues disputers, Who grants protection to those seeking it, Who is the Safe Harbor for the fearful. O God, if You have inscribed me in Your Source Book as someone destined to be miserable and deprived of blessing or straitened in provision, then I beseech You to erase such from the Book, and rather to establish me with Yourself as one destined to be fortunate and to have adequate sustenance and access to wealth; for You have said, and Your word is the Truth, in Your own Book, revealed to Your Messenger and Prophet, "God erases whatever He wishes, or establishes it, and with Him is the Source Book" (Qur'an 13:39). My God! By Your most Sublime Manifestation on this most honored night of mid-Sha'baan, in which every important matter is differentiated and then bound together, remove from my destiny any tribulation, whether I be conscious of it or not, and forgive me that which You are most cognizant of. O God, make me one of Your servants with the greatest good fortune and portion of that which You distribute on this night, of guiding light, or apportioned mercy, or sustenance, or bounty given Your believers. O God! O God! There is no deity but You! O God, give me a devout, pure heart that is free of associating partners with You, neither ungrateful nor miserable—a sound heart that is humble and beseeching. O God, fill my heart with Your Light and the Lights of Your Manifestations, Your Beauty, Perfection and Love, Your Infallibility, Power, and Knowledge. O Most Merciful of the Merciful! And may God, the Exalted, bless our Master Muhammad and his family and companions and grant them peace.