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*The
Significance of*

شعبان

Sha'bān

شَهْرُ شَعْبَانَ

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مَضَامِين

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The Significance of Sha‘bān

Sha‘bān, the eighth Islamic month is second only to Ramaḍān in virtue, blessings and greatness. It is due to this virtue and greatness that the Prophet ﷺ used to emphasise its importance not only verbally but practically too.

Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah ؓ narrates, “Rasūlullāh ﷺ used to fast till we would say that he would never stop fasting and he would abandon fasting till we would say that he would never fast. I never saw Rasūlullāh ﷺ fasting for a whole month except the month of Ramaḍān and did not see him fasting in any month more than in the month of Sha‘bān.” (*Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, An-Nasā’ī*)

Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah ؓ narrates, “Rasūlullāh ﷺ used to fast the (whole) month of Sha‘bān except for a few days.” (*An-Nasā’ī*)

Sayyidunā Usāmah ؓ asked, “O Rasūlullāh! I do not see you fasting in any month as much as in Sha‘bān.” He ﷺ replied, “It is a month people are negligent of between Rajab and Ramaḍān. It is a month in which deeds are raised towards the Lord of the worlds. Therefore, I like my deeds to be raised whilst I am fasting.” (*An-Nasā’ī*)

Fifteenth of Sha‘bān

Amongst the days and nights of Sha‘bān, the fifteenth night is noted for its great blessings and virtues. This night is known as *Laylatul-Barā’ah* (the night of emancipation), as in it a large number of servants are forgiven and emancipated from the fire of Jahannam.

Fortunate indeed are those who attain the full blessings and benefits of this night by spending it in performing good and refraining from evil. One must strive his utmost to attend to ‘ibādah (worship) in this auspicious night as this night indeed is a great favour of Allāh ﷻ for the believers. There are many virtues mentioned in the aḥādīth in regard to this night.

1. Sayyidunā Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal ؓ narrates that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said, “In the fifteenth night of Sha‘bān, Allāh ﷻ manifests and forgives all His creation except for the mushrik and the spiteful.” (*Aṭ-Ṭabarānī*)

2. Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah ؓ narrates, “The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ came to me (one night) and took off his clothes, but he had hardly sat down when he got up again, put on his clothes and left. A strong ghayrah (sense of honour and self-respect) overtook me as I thought he was going to one of his other wives. I followed him and found him in the graveyard of Baqī‘ seeking forgiveness for believing men and women and the martyrs. I said (to myself), ‘May my parents be sacrificed for you. You, (the Prophet) are in want of your Lord and I am in want of the world.’”

I returned to my room (quickly) and I was breathless. The Prophet ﷺ arrived shortly and said, ‘Why are you breathless, O ‘Ā’ishah?’ I said, ‘May my parents be sacrificed for you. You came to me and took off your clothes, but you had hardly sat down when you got up and put on your clothes (and left). A strong ghayrah overtook me and I thought you were going to one of your (other) wives until I saw you in (the graveyard of) Baqī‘ doing whatever you were doing.’

He ﷺ said, ‘O ‘Ā’ishah! Did you fear that Allāh and his Messenger will treat you with injustice? Jibra’īl came to me and said, ‘This night is the fifteenth night of Sha‘bān. Allāh sets free from Hell during this night, souls equivalent to the hair (and wool) of the goats of Banī Kalb.’ (Banī Kalb possessed the largest number of goats in the Arabian peninsula.)

‘However, Allāh will not look (with mercy) even on this (auspicious) night towards mushriks, one who harbours ill will against his fellow beings, one who cuts himself off from his near relatives, one who dangles his clothes over his ankles, one disobedient to parents and a habitual drunkard.’”

Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah ؓ says, “He took off his clothes, then said, ‘O ‘Ā’ishah! Will you permit me to spend this night in worship.’ I replied, ‘Certainly. May my parents be sacrificed for you.’ The Prophet ﷺ got up and remained in sajdah (prostration) for a very long time until I thought he had passed away. I got up to inquire and placed my hand on his feet to feel that he was alive, thus I became happy. I

heard him say in his prostration:

أَعُوذُ بِعَفْوِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ، وَأَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ، وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ
مِنْكَ، جَلَّ وَجْهِكَ، لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ، أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ

'I seek refuge in Your Forgiveness from Your Punishment. I seek refuge in Your Pleasure from Your Anger. I seek refuge in You from You i.e. Your Punishment. Majestic is Your Being. I am not able to praise You (as You are worthy of praise). You are exactly as You have praised Yourself.'

In the morning, I mentioned these words to him. He ﷺ said, 'O 'Ā'ishah! Learn them and teach them (to others) because Jibra'il taught me and ordered me to repeat them over and over again in sajdah.'" (Al-Bayhaqī)

Note: Shaykh Muftī Taqī Usmani ḥafīzahullāh states, "Although the chain of narrators of some of these aḥādīth suffer with some minor technical defects, yet when all these aḥādīth are combined together, it becomes clear that this night has some well founded merits, and observing this night as a sacred night is not a baseless concoction as envisaged by some modern scholars who, on the basis of these minor defects, have totally rejected giving any special importance to this night. In fact, some of these aḥādīth have been held by some scholars of ḥadīth as authentic and the defects in the chain of some others have been treated by them as minor technical defects which, according to the science of ḥadīth, are curable by the variety of their ways of narration.

That is why the elders of the Ummah have constantly been observing this night as a night of special merits and have been spending it in worship and prayers.”

Recommended Deeds

The following practices are derived from the aḥādīth which have been mentioned above for Sha‘bān and its virtuous 15th night.

1. It is desirable that one fasts in the month of Sha‘bān as much as one can. Fasting on the Ayyāmul-Bīd (i.e. 13th, 14th and 15th of the Islamic month) and Mondays and Thursdays will be a means of even more reward as it is Sunnah to fast on these days. However, if fasting in Sha‘bān is going to affect the fasting of Ramaḍān then one should refrain from it.

Note: The fast of the 15th of Sha‘bān can only be derived from a ḥadīth that has an extremely weak narrator in the chain of narration, due to which it cannot be relied upon in the matter of the injunctions of Sharī‘ah. Thus, the fast of the 15th of Sha‘bān cannot be termed as Sunnah or Mustahab.

2. Although ṣalāh should be performed in jamā‘ah (congregation) everyday, on this auspicious night, one must participate with deep and solemn care in the Maghrib, ‘Ishā and Fajr Ṣalāh.
3. Spend as much time of the night as possible in worship individually. No specific du‘ā or method of worship has

been prescribed. One may engage in dhikr, recitation of the Qur'ān, ṣalāh, learning and teaching or any other form of 'ibādah. However, one must refrain from worldly talk and wasting of time. If 'ibādah is not possible then at least avoid all sinful and useless acts and go to bed as soon as possible.

4. In one ḥadīth it has been mentioned that Rasūlullāh ﷺ visited the graveyard of Baqī'. However, one may not establish the practice to be Sunnah as there is no mention of Rasūlullāh ﷺ making it a general practice of this night. Hence, if one visits the graveyard once in a while it will be permissible.

One must refrain in particular from all those practices that are contrary to the Sunnah. Many of us deprive ourselves of the blessings of such auspicious moments and the Favours of Allāh ﷻ by following those customary acts which have no basis in the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

May Allāh ﷻ guide us all on the straight path and enlighten us with the blessings of this sacred month and its blessed night. Āmīn.

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