

Light Upon Light

Towards Correcting Our Beliefs and Practices

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Quran

"O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become Al-Muttaqun (the pious). (Fasting) for a fixed number of days, but if any of you is ill or on a journey, the same number (should be made up) from other days. And as for those who can fast with difficulty, (i.e. an old man, etc.), they have (a choice either to fast or) to feed a poor person (for every day). But whoever does good of his own accord, it is better for him. And that you fast, it is better for you if only you know."
(2:183-84)

Hadith

Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Every deed of man will receive ten to 700 times reward, except Siyam (fasting), for it is for Me and I shall reward it (as I like). There are two occasions of joy for one who fasts: one when he breaks the fast and the other when he will meet his Lord" (Muslim).

Are YOU Prepared?!

As the months of the year fly speedily by, we realize that soon comes upon us the most blessed month of the year – namely Ramadan. However, the question is: Are we prepared for it? Have we realized its coming and anticipated its arrival? Or is it merely the thought of good food to eat after fasting, and Eid celebrations and parties that puts such a month in our remembrance? As that time comes around again we must re-evaluate our intentions and look further into the blessed month that approaches, and in doing so we must begin with the Month of Sha'baan.

The month of Sha'baan is the eighth month of the Islaamic Calendar and comes before Ramadan. It too is a special month known for many notable characteristics. It was a month in which Allah's Messenger sallahu alayhi wa sallam would spend most of fasting. 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) said: "The Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to fast until we thought he would never break his fast, and not fast until we thought he would never fast. I never saw the Messenger of Allaah fasting for an entire month except in Ramadaan, and I never saw him fast more than he did in Sha'baan." (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, no. 1833; Muslim, no. 1956)

Usaamah ibn Zayd (may Allaah be pleased with them both) said: "I said, 'O Messenger of Allaah, I do not see you fasting in any other month like you fast in Sha'baan.' He said, 'That is a month to which people do not pay attention, between Rajab and Ramadaan, and it is a month in which deeds are lifted up to the Lord of the Worlds. I like for my deeds to be lifted up when I am fasting.'" (Narrated by al-Nasaa'i, see Saheeh al-Targheeb wa'l-Tarheeb, page 425). According to a report narrated by Abu Dawood (no. 2076) she said: "The most beloved of months for the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) to fast in was Sha'baan, and his fasting in Sha'baan was continuous with his fasting in Ramadaan." (Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani, see Saheeh Sunan Abi Dawood, 2/461).

Ibn Rajab (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: "Fasting in Sha'baan is better than fasting in the Sacred Months, and the best of voluntary fasts are those that are (observed in the months) closest to Ramadaan, before or after. The status of these fasts is like that of al-Sunan al-Rawaatib which are done before and after fard (prayers) and which make up for any shortfall in the number of obliagatory prayers. The same applies to fasts observed before and after Ramadaan. Just as al-Sunan al-Rawaatib are better than other kinds of voluntary prayers, so fasts observed (in the months) before and after Ramadaan are better than fasts at other times.

The phrase "Sha'baan is a month to which people do not pay attention, between Rajab and Ramadaan" indicates that because it comes between two important months, the Sacred Month of Rajab and the month of fasting, people are preoccupied with those two months and they do not pay attention to Sha'baan. Many people think that fasting in Rajab is better than fasting in Sha'baan, because Rajab is one of the Sacred Months, but this is not the case.

In the hadeeth quoted above there is an indication that even though certain times, places and people may be commonly thought to possess a particular virtue, there may be others that are better than them.

It also indicates that it is mustahabb to make good use of the times when people tend to be negligent, by doing acts of worship. A group of the Salaf used to fill the time between Maghrib and 'Isha' with prayer, saying that it was a time when many people were negligent. Another example is the remembrance of Allaah (dhikr) in the marketplace, because this means one is remembering Him in a place where people tend to be negligent and among people who are negligent.

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When Sha'baan began, if the Prophet sallahu alayhi wa sallam still had some voluntary fasts outstanding that he had not fasted, he would make them up during Sha'baan so that his naafil fasts would be complete before Ramadaan came. Similarly, if he had missed some Sunnah prayers or he had missed Qiyaam al-Layl, he would make it up. 'Aa'ishah used to make the most of this opportunity to make up any obligatory Ramadaan fasts that she had missed because of menstruation; during other months she was too busy with the Prophet sallahu alayhi wa sallam to fast. We should also note here that anyone who has any missed fasts to make up has to make them up before the next Ramadaan comes. It is not permissible to delay it until after the following Ramadaan except in cases of necessity (such as a valid excuse that continues between the two Ramadaans). Whoever is able to make them up before the (second) Ramadaan and does not do so, has to make them up after the (second) Ramadaan and in addition to that, he has to repent and to feed one poor person for each day that he missed. This is the view of Maalik, al-Shaafa'i and Ahmad.

Another benefit of fasting in Sha'baan is that it is a kind of training for the Ramadaan fast, in case a person finds it difficult to fast when Ramadaan starts; if he fasts in Sha'baan he will have gotten used to fasting and he will feel strong and energetic when Ramadaan comes. Sha'baan is like an introduction to Ramadaan and it has some things in common with Ramadaan, such as fasting, reciting Qur'aan and giving in charity. Salamah ibn Suhayl used to say: "The month of Sha'baan is the month of reciters (of the Qur'aan)." Habeeb ibn Abi Thaabit used to say, when Sha'baan came, "This is the month of reciters (of the Qur'aan)." When Sha'baan came, 'Amr ibn Qays al-Malaa'i used to close his store and devote his time to reading the Qur'aan.

Fasting at the end of Sha'baan

It was reported in *al-Saheehayn* from Abu Hurayrah (RA) that the Prophet (saws) said: **"Do not pre-empt Ramadaan by one or two days, except for those who have the habit of fasting regularly, in which case they may fast."** (Bukhaari, Muslim). There are other points of view on this issue. However, in brief we may say that there are three scenarios for fasting at the end of Sha'baan.

- **The first scenario is when a person fasts at the end of Sha'baan with the intention of being on the safe side and not missing the first day of Ramadaan. This is forbidden.**

- The second scenario is when a person fasts with the intention of fulfilling a vow or of making up a day of Ramadaan that he missed or as an act of expiation (kafaarah), etc. This is permissible according to the majority.

- The third scenario is when this is purely a voluntary fast. This is regarded as makrooh by those who said that we should differentiate between Sha'baan and Ramadaan by not fasting for a while. Among those who said this was al-Hasan. If it happens to coincide with a day when a person habitually fasts, Maalik and those who agreed with him permitted this, but al-Shaafa'i, al-'Oozaa'i, Ahmad and others made a distinction between cases where it is a fast which a person habitually observes or otherwise.

In conclusion, the hadeeth of Abu Hurayrah quoted above is what we should follow according to the majority of scholars. It is makrooh to observe a voluntary fast one or two days before Ramadaan for those who do not habitually fast on those days and who have not previously fasted until the end of Sha'baan. It may be asked: why is it makrooh to fast just before Ramadaan (for those who do not have a prior habit of fasting)? The answer is that there are a number of reasons why this is so, such as:

Firstly: lest extra days be added to the fast of Ramadaan that are not part of it. Fasting on the day of Eid is prohibited for the same reason, lest we fall into the same trap as the People of the Book with regard to fasting, as they added to their fasts because of their own whims and desires.

For the same reason it is also forbidden to fast on the "day of doubt". 'Ammar bin Yasir (RA) reported: He who observes the fast on a doubtful day, has in fact disobeyed Abul-Qasim, (i.e., Messenger of Allah (saws)). [Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi]

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Question & Answer

Question: Is standing the night of the 15th of Sha'baan in prayer and fasting during its day legislated?

Response: Nothing firm and reliable has been established on the authority of the Prophet (sal-Allaahu `alayhe wa sallam) that he stood in prayer in the night and fasted during the day of the 15th of Sha'baan. So the night of the 15th of Sha'baan is like any other night, and if someone is a regular worshipper during other nights, then he may stand the night in prayer on this night without assuming anything special (because of it being the night of the 15th of Sha'baan). This is because specifying a time for any act of worship requires a authentic proof, so if there is no authentic proof then the act is regarded as an innovation and all innovations are misguidance. Likewise, regarding specifically fasting during the 15th day of Sha'baan, then no (authentic) proof has been established on the authority of the Prophet (sal-Allaahu `alayhe wa sallam) to indicate the legislation of fasting on that particular day.

As for that which is mentioned from the ahaadeeth regarding this subject, then all of it is weak as the people of knowledge have indicated. However, whoever has the habit of fasting the 13th, 14th and 15th (of every month), then he can continue and fast during Sha'baan as he fasts during the other months, without assuming anything special about the 15th of Sha'baan. Also, the Prophet (sal-Allaahu `alayhe wa sallam) used to increase in fasting during this month (Sha'baan), however, he did not particularise the 15th day, rather proceeded as per norm.

Source: Shaykh Ibn Fowzaan in 'al-Bid'u wal-Muhdathaat wa maa laa asla lahu' - Page 614 & 'Noorun alad-Darb Fataawa' - Volume 1, Page 87

On ly One-Third!

The "day of doubt" is a day when people are not sure whether it is Ramadaan or not, when news of the sighting of the crescent moon comes from one whose word cannot be accepted. As for a cloudy day, some of the 'ulamaa' said that this was also a 'day of doubt' and said that fasting was not allowed on this day. This is the view of the majority.

Secondly: to make a distinction between fard (obligatory) fasts and naafil (supererogatory) fasts, because making a clear distinction between fard actions and naafil actions is prescribed in Islam. Hence it is haraam to fast on the day of Eid, and the Prophet (saws) forbade following an obligatory prayer immediately with another prayer unless they are separated by saying salaam or speaking, especially in the case of the Sunnah prayer performed just before Fajr. It is prescribed to make a clear separation between this prayer and the obligatory prayer. Hence it is prescribed to pray it at home and to lie down afterwards.

Some ignorant people may think that the reason why we do not fast just before Ramadaan is so that we can make the most of eating and have our fill of our desires before we have to deny ourselves by fasting. This is an ignorant mistake on the part of those who think this. And Allaah knows best.

Islam-OA

Book Recommendation:

Advise on Establishing an Islamic Home by Shaykh Muhammad Salih al-Munajjid

It is an excellent book which describes the foundations of an Islamic household, and also the means to achieve that. It discusses modern day affairs that occur, evils which are prevalent and means of removing them from ourselves.

Whilst in the days of fasting, we abstain from food from the morning till the evening; however many times this abstention occurs only during the prescribed periods and after it's over we spend our nights feasting. As a reminder to all of us, the following article is presented on the Sunnah of eating and how the predecessors of the past adhered to this principle. It is not restricted just to fasting times, but rather all times, yet is mentioned particularly now, as over-eating while fasting goes against the basic principle of staying away from food, and is harmful to the person themselves.

Not to mention those who spend hours merely in the kitchen preparing luxurious meals only to then spend the evenings tired and empty of any good except an over-full stomach.

May Allah help us to implement this eating style into our life and be able to adhere to it. Ameen!

On the authority of Al-Miqdaam ibn Maadiy-Karib who said: I heard the Messenger of Allaah saying: "*No human ever filled a vessel worse than the stomach. Sufficient for any son of Adam are some morsels to keep his back straight. But if it must be, then one third for his food, one third for his drink and one third for his breath.*" [Ahmad, At-Tirmidhee, An-Nasaa'ee, Ibn Maajah - hadeeth saheeh.]

1. Ibn Masaweh, a Muslim doctor, said after reading this hadeeth: "If the people only used these words, they would avoid all diseases and maladies and the clinics and pharmacies would be idle."

2. Another doctor, Al-Harith ibn Kalada said: "That which has killed mankind is the introduction of food on top of food before it has been digested."

3. As for spiritual benefits: humbleness of heart, strength of understanding, lessening of lower desires, lessening of personal opinions and anger, while overeating induces the opposites of all of those. Al-Hasan Al-Basree said: "O, son of Adam, eat with one third of your stomach and drink with one third and leave one third of your stomach to breathe so that you may think."

4. Ibn Umar: A man said to Ibn Umar: "Shouldn't I bring you some jawarish?" Ibn Umar said: "What is that?" He said: "Something which aids in digesting your food after you eat." Ibn Umar said: "I have not eaten to being full for four months. That is not because I am not able to do so, but I was with a group of people who were hungry more than they were full."

5. Not reaching your goals: Muhammad ibn Wasi said: "Whoever eats little will understand and make others understand and will be clear and humble. Overeating weighs a person down and keeps him from much of what he wants [to accomplish]."

6. Al-Hasan Al-Basree: "The test of Aadam, alayhis-salaam, was food and it is your test until Qiyama." And, it used to be said: "Whoever takes control of his stomach gets control of all good deeds." And: "Wisdom does not reside in a full stomach." One day, Al-Hasan offered some food to his companion who said: "I have eaten until I am no longer able to eat." To which Al-Hasan said: "SubhaanAllaah! Does a Muslim eat until he is no longer able to eat?"

7. Allaah grants this world to those whom He loves and those He does not love but only grants hunger to those whom he loves

Author: Al-Haafidh Ibn Rajab al-Hanbalee

Source: Jaami' Al-'Uloom wal-Hikam, hadeeth no. 47

Fasting is a type of worship that draws one closer to Allah and has been prescribed to purify the soul and to train it in good deeds. The fasting person must be on guard against any act that may cause him to lose the benefits of his fast and render it invalid. As in the end, fasting is for ourselves, and Allah is free of needing us to stay away from our food and drink. Abu Hurairah narrated that the Prophet said: **"Perhaps a fasting person will get nothing from his fast save hunger, and perhaps the one who stands to pray at night will get nothing from his standing except sleeplessness."** [an-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah and al-Hakim / Sahih al-Jami']. In another Narration **"It may be that a fasting person attains nothing but hunger and thirst from his fasting"**. [Ibn Majah, Darimi, Ahmad and al-Baihaqee; Sahih]

To then derive the most benefit from our fasting we must cleanse not only our actions from what is forbidden, but also our environments – namely our homes in which we spend much of our time. Our environment plays one of the greatest effects on our thoughts, actions, desires, and temptations and so in order to rectify ourselves we have to rectify our environments.

Under this comes many things which we often neglect or overlook, but makes us lose much of the blessings of Allah. We may be unconsciously driving away the angels, taking and inserting satanic ideas into our heads, and wasting our time in idle nonsense for things of no benefit.

The first of the neglected things may be the hanging of pictures. Although it seems of no consequence, we see in Hadith the Prophet sallahu alayhi wa sallam said, **"Indeed, the angels do not enter a house in which there is a dog or an image."** (Bukhari, Muslim) These angels of mercy are driven away by images of animate beings such as in pictures or portraits which may be hanging in the rooms. And if the mercy is taken away from a place, it gives better access to the shayateen (devils) to come and cause harm.

Yet Shayan's harm is not only through vices such as pictures, but are sent to us in even more direct forms. In this century we are a generation often spoon fed things into our brains without ever having realized it. Things such as the television, computers, and movies are the greatest causes of destruction. Although they can be good, if they are used in the correct manner and for the correct purposes, are most times one of the greatest traps shaytan has set out for a family. In researches, television has seen to effect children's' sleep, weight, grades, behavior, and more. It changes a child's family interactions and exposes them to many shows which are filled with stereotypes, violent solutions to problems, and mean behavior. It introduces into the home many unIslamic concepts of lifestyles, violence and attitudes. And yet, we can see in many homes that the children are left to be baby-sat by this same television, while the parents do other things, not knowing the corruption which comes from this. Furthermore, much of the same can be said with many computer games and movies. These games can be seen to promote violence and encourage a person to fight, steal, lie, plumage and murder – although in Islaam we know that these are incorrect and forbidden. Often it's noted that children try to imitate those they see in video games, television and movies in real life. Even if it was empty of all these forbidden things, the waste of time which comes about is tremendous. Children in the prime of youth waste away hours on such things, and are allowed to become heedless that this time will never return to them.

Although it seems these are only in relation to children, the fact of the matter is that this reminder should go out to parents first and foremost so that they also reflect on their own actions. Age does not play a factor in the wasting of time incorrectly and the actions which are allowed to take place around the homes. This includes grown men and women neglecting their duties and instead spending endless time on the computer, watching movies, talking on the phone etc. Many times including the hidden evils which arise from that, such as backbiting, slander, watching non-mahram men/women clothed in inappropriate fashions, enjoying watching haraam actions and forgetting the purpose of creation.

We have been sent on this Earth with a purpose, and that is to worship Allah in His entirety. However, the things which are often occupying our environments lead us away from this purpose. They cause us to reduce the rights of Allah, and ultimately be punished for such actions. They are also one of the main causes of wasting time which will never again return to us. It was reported by Ibn Abbas (RadiAllahu Anhu) that Prophet Muhammad sallahu alayhi wa sallam said: **"There are two blessings which many people lose: (They are) health and free time for doing good."** (Bukhari 8/421)

Once our time is gone, there is no receiving it again. Once this Ramadan passes, there's no guarantee that we will meet with another ever again. Therefore we should always keep in mind, and especially in this upcoming time, that Allah watches us and is ever knowing of what we do.

O you who believe! Ward off from yourselves and your families a Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who disobey not, (from executing) the Commands they receive from Allah, but do that which they are commanded. (At-Tahrim : 66)