

The last nights days of Ramadan

How to take full advantage and benefit from the last part of Ramadan ? Though all parts of Ramadan are full of blessings and rewards, it's last ten nights hold a special status reflected in the recommendations and practices of the Messenger of Allah, *salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*, and his companions. I will focus here on three major practices of the Prophet, *salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*, and his companions during these days.

Praying in the last ten nights of Ramadan

Al-Bukhari and Muslim record from 'Aishah that during the last ten days of Ramadan, the Messenger of Allah would wake his wives up during the night and then remain apart from them (that is, being busy in acts of worship). A narration in Muslim states: "He would strive [to do acts of worship] during the last ten days of Ramadan more than he would at any other time."

Aisha reported that with the start of the last ten days of Ramadan, the Prophet used to tighten his waist belt (i.e. work hard) and used to pray all the night, and used to keep his family awake for the prayers. [Bukhari]

Performing I'tikaf in the Masjid (seclusion in the Mosque)

I'tikaf is the seclusion and staying in the mosque with the intention of becoming closer to Allah. This was the practice of the Prophet, *salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*, during the last ten days of Ramadan especially. He would do it during other months as well.

'Aisha reported that the Messenger of Allah, *salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*, used to practice I'tikaf in the last ten nights of Ramadan and used to say, "Look for the Night of Qadr in the last ten nights of the month of Ramadan" [Bukhari]

Abu Hurairah, *radiyallahu 'anhu* said: "Allah's Messenger, *salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*, used to perform i'tikaf for ten days every Ramadan, then when it was the year in which he was taken (died), he performed I'tikaf for twenty days. [Bukhari]

'Aisha reported that the Prophet, *salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*, used to practice I'tikaf in the last ten days of Ramadan till he died and then his wives used to practice I'tikaf after him. [Bukhari]

'Aishah *radhiya Allahu `anha* also reported that the Prophet, *salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*, "Used to perform i'tikaf in the last ten days of Ramadan until Allah the Mighty and Majestic, took him. [Bukhari and Muslim]

Al-Bukhari records from Abu Said that the Prophet (S) said: "Whoever makes I'tikaf with me is to make I'tikaf during the last ten [nights]."

This Sunnah of the Prophet, *salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*, has been abandoned by many Muslims and it is worth reviving it in this era.

The sunnah or preferred *i`tikaf* has no specific time limit. It can be fulfilled by staying in the mosque with the intention of making *i`tikaf* for a long or short time. The reward will be according to how long one stays in the mosque. If one leaves the mosque and then returns, he should renew his intention to perform *itikaf*.

Ya'la ibn Umayyah said: "I secluded myself in the mosque for some time for *I`tikaf*." 'Ata told him: "That is *I`tikaf*, as long as you secluded yourself there."

One who is performing Sunnah (like in Ramadan) *i`tikaf* (i.e. not the obligatory one that is made after a vow) may end his *i`tikaf* at any time, even if it is before the period he intended to stay.

It is preferred for the one who is making *I`tikaf* to perform many supererogatory acts of worship and to occupy himself with prayers, reciting the Qur'an, glorifying and praising Allah, extolling His oneness and His greatness, asking His forgiveness, sending salutations on the Prophet, upon whom be peace, and supplicating Allah - that is, all actions that bring one closer to Allah. Included among these actions is studying and reading books of tafsir and hadith, books on the lives of the Prophets, upon whom be peace, books of fiqh, and so on. It is also preferred to set up a small tent in the courtyard of the mosque as the Prophet did.

Permissible Acts for the Mu`takif (the person performing I`tikaf)

The following acts are permissible for one who is making *I`tikaf*

- (1) The Person may leave his place of *I`tikaf* to bid farewell to his wife and a Woman can visit her husband who is in *I`tikaf* } Safiyyah, *radhiya Allahu `anha* said : The prophet *salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*, was making *i`tikaf* [in the last ten nights of Ramadan], so I came to visit him at night [and his wives were with him and then departed]. I talked with him for a while, then I stood up to leave, [so he said:"Do not hurry for I will accompany you",. He stood along with me to accompany me back -and her dwelling was in the house of Usaamah Ibn Zayd [until when he came to the door of the mosque near the door of Umm Salamah], two men of the Ansaar were passing by, when they saw the Prophet, *salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*, they hastened by, so the Prophet, *salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*, said : "Be at your ease for she is Safiyyah bintu Huyayy." So they said:"SubhanAllah, O Messenger of Allah! [we did not have any doubt about you].' He said: "Indeed Shaytan circulates in the son of Adam just as blood circulates, and I feared that he would insert an evil thought" -or he said : "something - into your hearts" [Bukhari and Muslim, in [] are additional narrations from Abu Dawud]

- (2) Combing and cutting one's hair, clipping one's nails, cleaning one's body, wearing nice clothes or wearing perfume are all permissible. 'Aishah reported: "The Prophet was Performing itikaf and he would put his head out through the opening to my room and I would clean [or comb in one narration] his hair. I was menstruating at the time." [al-Bukhari, Muslim, and Abu Dawud].
- (3) The person may go out for some need that he must perform. 'Aishah reported: "When the Prophet Performed I`tikaf, he brought his head close to me so I could comb his hair, and he would not enter the house except to fulfill the needs a person has." [al-Bukhari, and Muslim]. Ibn al-Mundhir says: "The scholars agree that the one who performs itikaf may leave the mosque in order to answer the call of nature, for this is something that he personally must perform, and he cannot do it in the mosque. Also, if he needs to eat or drink and there is no one to bring him his food, he may leave to get it. If one needs to vomit, he may leave the mosque to do so. For anything that he must do but cannot do in the mosque, he can leave it, and such acts will not void his itikaf, even if they take a long time. Examples of these types of acts would include washing one's self from sexual defilement and cleaning his body or clothes from impurities."
- (4) The person may eat, drink, and sleep in the mosque, and he should also keep it clean.

Actions that Nullify the I`tikaf

If a person performs one of the following acts, his I`tikaf will be nullified:

- (1) Intentionally leaving the mosque without any need to do so, even if it is for just a short time. In such a case, one would not be staying in the mosque, which is one of the principles of I`tikaf.
- (2) Abandoning belief in Islam, as this would nullify all acts of worship. If you ascribe a partner to Allah, your work will fail and you will be among the losers.
- (3) Losing one's reason due to insanity or drunkenness, or the onset of menstruation or post-childbirth bleeding, all of which disqualifies a person for itikaf.
- (4) Sexual intercourse. Allah says [in meaning]: "But do not associate with your wives while you are in seclusion (I`tikaf) in the mosques. Those are Limits (set by) Allah. Approach not nigh thereto. Thus does Allah make clear His Signs to men: that they may learn self-restraint. [al-Baqara; 2:187]

I`tikaf is not restricted to men only, women also can do it :

'Aisha (the wife of the Prophet) reported that the Prophet, salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam, used to practice I`tikaf in the last ten days of Ramadan till he died and then his wives used to practice I`tikaf after him.[Bukhari]. Dear Sister! when reading this do not forget the modesty and the Hijab of the wife of the Prophet (S) that you should observe if you intend to perform I`tikaf.

Seeking Laylatul-Qadr (the Night of Decree)

It is the greatest night of the year like the Day of `Arafah is the greatest day of the year. It is a night about which Allah revealed a full Surah, Suratul-Qadr [97:1-5] and the 3rd to the 6th verses of Surat ad-Dukhan [44:3-6]

It is the night when the Qur'an was revealed.

It is the night when the Message (the Final and seal of all messages) sent to Mohammad, *salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*, started

It is the night when the light, that would illuminate mankind to the end of life, started

It is the night when every matter of ordainment is decreed

Allah says in what can be translated as :

"Verily! We have sent it (this Qur'aan) down in the Night of Decree (Lailatul-Qadr). And what will make you know what the Night of Decree is? The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months. Therein descend the angels and the Rooh (ie. Jibreel [Gabriel]) by Allaah's Permission with all Decrees, Peace! until the appearance of dawn." [97:1-5]

and in Surat ad-Dukhan :

"We sent it (this Qur'aan) down on a blessed Night. Verily, We are ever warning (mankind of Our Torment). Therein (that Night) is decreed every matter of ordainment. Amran (i.e. a command or this Qur'aan or His Decree of every matter) from Us. Verily, We are ever sending (the Messenger). (As) a Mercy from your Lord. Verily! He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower. [44:3-6]

A person who misses Laylatul-Qadr is really a deprived person!

Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet, *salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*, said " The blessed month has come to you. Allah has made fasting during it obligatory upon you. During it the gates to Paradise are opened and the gates of Hellfire are locked, and the devils are chained. There is a night [during this month] which is better than a thousand months. Whoever is deprived of its good is really deprived [of something great]. [Ahmad, an-Nisa'i and al-Bayhaqi]

One who misses this blessed night then he has missed much good for no one misses it except one from whom it is withheld. Therefore it is recommended that the Muslim who is eager to be obedient to Allaah should stand in Prayer during this night out of Eemaan and hoping for the great reward, since if he does this, Allaah will forgive his previous sins (1).

What happens to the person who witnesses Laylatul-Qadr? and what should one do?

Abu Hurairah Radhiya Allahu `anhu reported that the Messenger of Allah, salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam, said : "Whoever stands (in prayer) in Lailatul-Qadr out of Eemaan (faith and sincerity) and seeking reward then his previous sins are forgiven". [Bukhari]

It is recommended to supplicate a lot during this night, it is reported from our mother 'Aishah radhiya Allahu `anha, that she said: "O Messenger of Allah! What if I knew which night Lailatul-Qadr was, then what should I say in it?" He said.- "Say.- (Allahumma innaka 'affuwwun tuhibbul 'afwa fa'fu 'annee.)

"O Allaah You are The One Who pardons greatly, and loves to pardon, so pardon me.". [at-Tirmithi and Ibn Majah with a Sahih Isnad]

When is Laylatul-Qadr ?

It is preferred to seek this night during the last ten odd nights of Ramadan, as the Prophet salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam,, strove his best in seeking it during that time. We have already mentioned that the Prophet would stay up during the last ten nights, would wake his wives, and then would remain apart from them to worship.

Ibn Abbas reported that the Prophet,salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam, said, "Look for the Night of Qadr in the last ten nights of Ramadan , ' on the night when nine or seven or five nights remain out of the last ten nights of Ramadan (i.e. 21, 23, 25, respectively)." [Bukhari]

'Aishah radhiya Allahu `anha said: "Allah's Messenger used to practice I'tikaf in the last ten nights and say: 'Seek out Lailatul-Qadr in the (odd nights) of the last ten of Ramadan.'" [Bukhari and Muslim]

However if the servant is too weak or unable, then he should at least not let the last seven pass him by, due to what is reported from Ibn 'Umar, who said: Allah's Messenger said: "Seek it in the last ten, and if one of you is too weak or unable then let him not allow that to make him miss the final seven.'" [Bukhari and Muslim]

This explains his saying: "I see that your dreams are in agreement (that it is in the last seven) so he who wishes to seek it out then let him seek it in the last seven.'" [Bukhari and Muslim]

It is known from the Sunnah, that knowledge of the exact night upon which Lailatul-Qadr falls was taken up because the people argued, 'Ubaadah ibn as- Saamit, radiyalloahu 'anhu, said: The Prophet came out intending to tell us about Lailatul-Qadr, however two men were arguing and he said: "I come out to inform you about Lailatul-Qadr but so and so, and, so and so were arguing, so it was raised up, and perhaps that is better for you, so seek it on the (twenty) ninth and the (twenty) seventh and the (twenty) fifth.'" [Bukhari]

Some of the ahadeeth indicate that Lailatul-Qadr is in the last ten nights, while others indicate that it is in the odd nights of the last ten, so the first are general and the second more particular, and the particular has to be given priority over the general. Other ahadeeth state that it is in the last seven - and these are restricted by mention of one who is too weak or unable. So there is no confusion, all the ahadeeth agree and are not contradictory.

In conclusion: The Muslim should seek out Lailatui-Qadr in the odd nights of the last ten: the night of the twenty-first, the twenty-third, the twenty-fifth, the twenty-seventh and the twenty-ninth. If he is too weak or unable to seek it out in all the odd nights, then let him seek it out in the odd nights of the of seven: the night of the twenty-fifth, the twenty-seventh and the twenty-ninth And Allah knows best. (1)

What are the signs of laylatul-Qadr?

Allaah's Messenger , salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam, described the morning after Lailatul-Qadr, so that the Muslim may know which day it is. From Ubayy, radhiya Allahu 'anhu, who said: that he, salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam, said: "On the morning following Lailatui-Qadr the sun rises not having any rays, as if it were a brass dish, until it rises up." [Muslim, Abu Dawud, Tirmithi and Ibn Majah]

Abu Hurairah, radhiya Allahu 'anhu, said : "We were discussing Lailatul-Qadr in the presence of Allah's Messenger so he said : 'Which of you remembers [the night] when the moon arose and was like half a plate?... [Muslim]

Ibn 'Abbaas, radhiya Allahu 'anhuma, said: Allaah's Messenger, salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam, said: "Lailatul-Qadr is calm and pleasant, neither hot nor cold, the sun arises on its morning being feeble and red." [at-Tayaalisee, Ibn Khuzaimah and al-Bazaar with a Hasan Isnad]

We pray to Allah All Mighty Most Merciful to bless us this Ramadan by witnessing Laylatul-Qadr

Zakat ul-Fitr

None of us can escape not saying a few misplaced words during Ramadhan. It is from the Mercy of Allah SWT that He prescribed on us Zakat al-Fitr to get rid of the bad effect of vain talks and useless speeches in Ramadhan, as well as to feed the needy on the day of `eid and make him happy on that day as well.

Zakat al-Fitr is mandatory on every Muslim on his behalf and on the behalf of all people he is in charge of. "The Muslim gives it for himself and for those whom he takes care of-. young or old, male or female, free or slave - due to the hadeeth of Ibn 'Umar, radiyallaahu 'anhuma: "Allah's Messenger ordered Sadaqatul-Fitr on behalf of the young and the old,

and the free and the slave - whom you provide for." [ad-Daraqutni and al-Baihaqui : Hasan]"(1)

Also Ibn `Umar said "Allah's Messenger, salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam, obligated Zakat al-Fitr [for Ramadan upon the people]".[Bukhari and Muslim]

Another Hadith gives more details :

Ibn 'Umar said, "The Prophet made incumbent on every male or female, free man or slave, the payment of one Saa` of dates or barley as Sadaqat-ul-Fitr (or said Sadaqa-Ramadan)." The people then substituted half Sa' of wheat for that. Ibn 'Umar used to give dates (as Sadaqat-ul-Fitr). Once there was scarcity of dates in Medina and Ibn 'Umar gave barley. 'And Ibn 'Umar used to give Sadaqat-ul-Fitr for every young and old person. He even used to give on behalf of my children. Ibn 'Umar used to give Sadaqatul-Fitr to those who had been officially appointed for its collection. People used to give Sadaqat-ul-Fitr (even) a day or two before the 'Eid. [Bukhari]

Ibn'Abbaas, radiyalloahu'anhu, that he used to say: "He who brings wheat it will be accepted from him, whoever brings barley it will be accepted from him whoever brings dates it will be accepted from him, whoever brings rye it will be accepted from him, and whoever brings raisins it will be accepted from him, and I think he said : whoever brings (barley) gruel it will be accepted from him. [Ibn Khuzaimah with a Sahih Isnad]

Zakat al-Fitr has to be given in the form of food. That is the practice of the Messenger of Allah salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam and the practice of the Sahabah. It also has to be given to the poor before Eid Prayer.

Ibn `Abbas reported that the Messenger of Allah, salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam, enjoined Zakat al-Fitr on the one who fasts to shield one's self from any indecent act or speech and for the purpose of providing food for the poor. It is accepted as zakah for the person who pays it before the `Eid Salah, and it is a mere sadaqah for one who pays it after the Salah" [Abu Dawud, an-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah : Hasan]

It can be given a day or two before Eid as well and [Shaikh Ali Hasan and Shaikh Salim al-Hilali say :] it is from the Sunnah that there should be a person with whom it is gathered just as the Prophet entrusted Abu Hurairah, radiya Allahu 'anhu, who said: "Allah's Messenger entrusted me to look after the zakah of Ramadan." [Bukhari]

Also, Ibn 'Umar, radiya Allahu 'anhu, used to give some of it to those who would collect it - and they were those whom the imam sent to collect it, and that was a day or two before `Eidul-Fitr. It is reported by Ibn Khuzaimah by way of 'Abdul-Waarith from Ayyoob: I said: "When did Ibn 'Umar used to give the saa'?" He said: "When the collectors had finished." I said: "When did the collectors finish?" He said: "A day or two days before the day of Fitr."

As for its wisdom, "It has been prescribed by the Wise Legislator as a purification for those who fasted, from loose and indecent talk, and to feed the poor Muslims so that they have

enough provision for that day - as is shown by the previous hadeeth of Ibn 'Abbaas, radiya Allahu 'anhuma."

O Allah, we ask you by Your Beautiful Names and Attributes of higher rank, and by all the sincere deeds we have done, do not deprive us from their company, and do not deprive us from looking at you in Paradise. Aameen

Suhaib radhiya Allahu `anh relates that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: When the inmates of the Paradise will have entered the Paradise, Allah, the Master of Honor and Glory, will ask them: Do you want anything more that I should give you? They will submit: (O Allah)! Have you not made our faces shining? Have you not admitted us to the Paradise and saved us from the Hell? (What else is left to be desired?) Thereupon, the veil will be withdrawn, and the inmates of the Paradise will not have known anything dearer to them than looking at their Lord. [Muslim].