

The blessed night of half Sh'ban

By Shaykh Ibrahim Longi

There are different ahadith that indicate the excellence of the night between the 14 and 15 of the sacred month of Sha'ban and about the opportunity for the believers to focus on their worship searching for istighfar. Even though this kind of narrations have different weak elements in their chain of transmission, the large part of ancient and modern Ulamaa have considered them a reliable proof and the same for the practice of pious predecessors (Salaf salihin).

Between this traditions there is one of Sayyiduna Mu'adh Ibn Jabal (r.A.a) that has reported that the Profet* said: "Allah turns to His creation in the night of mid Sha'ban and forgive all His creatures except idolaters and he who keep hatred in his heart". Accordin to another tradition from 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr "he who keep hatred and the murderer".

Sayyidatuna 'Aisha (r.A.a) has reported in a longer hadith that the Profet* said: "Allah descend to the nearest of the heavens in the night of half Sha'ban and grant His pardon to more people that the hairs of the flocks of the tribe of Kalb" (a tribe famous because of the large number of flocks they had).

Sayyiduna 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (karrama Allahu wajhah) reported that the Profet* said "In the night of half Sha'ban that each of you can watch in prayer and fast during the next day, since Allah descends to the closest of the skies during the night, starting from sunset, and says: "Isn't there anyone who asks forgiveness that I can grant? Isn't there someone who asks for sustenance to which I can give them? Isn't there someone who is in trouble and I can alleviate it? And so on, until dawn".

From Sayyiduna 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (r.A.a) the Profet* said: "There are five nights in which the invocation is not rejected: Friday night, Rajab's first night, the fifteenth of Sha'ban and those of the two eid".

Mawlana 'Abd ar-Rahman Mubarakpuri in his commentary 'Jami at-Tirmidhi' said: "The large number of ahadith about this night is a proof against those who deny its existence".

Some mufasssirun said that the blessed night (laylah mubarakah) mentioned in Surat ad-Dhukhan (44:3) could be the night of half Sha'ban - instead of the night of the Decree during the last 10 days of Ramadan as others say.

The hukm (juridical status) of this night

Speaking about the divergence of opinion among the scholars concerning this night's merit, Ibn Taymiyyah (rA) himself indicated that it is generally to be recognized and confirmed

"Some say that there is no difference between this night and other nights of the year; however, the opinion of many scholars and most of our fellow hanbali is that it is a night of greater value, and this on the basis of what the words of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal indicates, based on many reported ahadith and in light of how much confirmed in words and works from the first generations (al athar as-salafiyyah)."

The recommendable nature of the night watch during the half Sha'ban night is therefore not based on something that has been formally reported by the Prophet * or by His Companions, but by what was practiced by a group of Successors, among the noblest jurists of the people of the Sham.

Similarly, imam as-Suyuti (rAa) said: "Concerning the night of half Sha'ban, it has great value, and it is meritorious (mustahabb) to dedicate a part of it to the adorations (surerogatory)"

And similarly Shaykh Al-Ajhuri al-Maliki (rAa) said: “ Ata’ ibn Yasar, the great successor of Medinah, said: “After the night of the Decree there is not another night during the year more virtuous than this of half Sha’ban”.

Likewise, Ibn al-Hajj reported how pious Predecessors used to dedicate this night to worship, preparing for it in advance.

Devotional practices related to it

There are no indications concerning it exclusively.

Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani advised to dedicate the second part of the night to adoration, if it was not possible to stay awake the whole night, and to engage above all in prayer, in reading the Holy Qur'an, in remembrance of Allah and invocations, with particular reference to the request for forgiveness: this applies as much to healthy people as to those who are sick, who can turn to the Most High to the extent of their possibilities, even if they are limited.

May Allah accept the worship of His servants, and count us among those who sincerely implore His forgiveness.