
Ruling on celebrating the Mid-Sha`ban Night

Article taken and slightly adapted from: alifta.gov.sa

[Part No. 1; Page Nos. 186 - 192]

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

All praise be to Allaah Who has perfected the religion for us and has completed His Favour upon us. May peace and blessings of Allaah be upon His Prophet and Messenger Muhammad, the Prophet of repentance and mercy.

Allaah (Exalted be He) says: **[This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islaam as your religion.]**¹ Allaah (Exalted be He) also says: **[Or have they partners (with Allaah — false gods) who have instituted for them a religion which Allaah has not ordained?]**² Moreover, it is reported in the Two Saheeh (authentic) Books of Hadeeth (i.e. Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim) on the authority of `Aishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: **[Anyone who introduces anything into this matter of ours (Islaam) that is not part of it will have it rejected.]**³ Furthermore, it is reported in Saheeh Muslim on the authority of Jaabir (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to address people in the Friday sermon by saying: **[To proceed, the best of speech is the Book of Allaah, the best of guidance is the guidance of Muhammad (peace be upon him), the most evil of matters are those which are newly-introduced in religion, and every Bid`ah (innovation in religion) is Dalalah (deviation from what is right).]** There are many other Ayahs (Qur'aanic verses) and Hadeeths to the same effect. All these Ayahs and Hadeeths clearly indicate that Allaah (Glorified and Exalted be He) has perfected for this Ummah (nation based on one creed) its religion and has completed upon it His Favour and did not cause His Prophet (peace be upon him) to die until he had conveyed the clear message, explained to the Ummah all what Allaah has legislated for it of words and actions. He (peace be upon him) had pointed out that all the people would innovate after him and interpolate into the religion of Islaam of words and actions are rejected Bid`ah (innovation in religion), even if done with good intentions. The Sahaabah (Companions of the Prophet) and the scholars of Islaam after them defined this matter, and thus, they denied such Bid`ahs and warned against them as mentioned by all the scholars who wrote about the great status of the Sunnah (whatever is reported from the Prophet) and the denial of Bid`ah, such as Ibn Waddah, Al-Tartushy, Aboo Shamah and others.

¹ Soorah al-Maa'idah [5:3]

² Soorah al-Shoora [42:21]

³ Sunan Ibn Maajah

Ruling on celebrating the Mid-Sha`ban Night

From the Bid`ahs which have been introduced into the religion by people is the Bid`ah of celebrating the Mid-Sha`ban night and fasting on its day. There is no reliable evidence for such actions. There are weak Hadeeths reported with regard to the virtue of the Mid-Sha`ban night, but it is not allowed to rely on them as evidence. As for what is reported regarding the virtue of praying during the Mid-Sha`ban night, they are all fabricated Hadeeths as confirmed by many Muslim scholars, and we will, In'sha'allaah (if Allaah wills), mention some of their comments on that. Besides, there are some other narrations regarding the virtue of this night reported from the Salaf (righteous predecessors) of the people of the Levant (the region covering Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine) and others. What the majority of Muslim scholars agreed upon is that the celebration of Mid-Sha`ban night is Bid`ah and that the Hadeeths reported regarding the virtue of this night are all weak and some of them are fabricated. Among those who drew attention to the weakness and fabrication of these Hadeeths is Al-Hafiz ibn Rajab in his book Lata'if al-Ma`arif, besides others. It is to be noted that the weak Hadeeths can be applied only in the acts of worship, the origin of which have been established by sound and authentic evidence. As for celebrating the Mid-Sha`ban night, there is no sound and authentic evidence supporting it to justify reliance on the weak Hadeeths in this regard.

This great rule was stated by Imaam Aboo al-`Abbaas, the Shaykh of Islaam, Ibn Taymeeyah (may Allaah be merciful to him). Dear reader, I will convey for you some of what the people of knowledge say about this issue in order to be on clear evidence regarding it. Moreover, the majority of Muslim scholars (may Allaah be merciful to all of them) said that it is an obligation to refer the issues which the people differ over to the Book of Allaah (Exalted be He) and to the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him), and thus, what both these sources or either of them approve, then it is the legislation which should be followed and what contradicts them should be set aside and whatever acts of worship that are not mentioned in these two sources, then they are Bid`ahs which are not allowed to be practiced, let alone inviting people to them and encouraging them. Allaah (Glorified and Exalted be He) says in Soorah al-Nisaa': **[O you who believe! Obey Allaah and obey the Messenger (Muhammad ﷺ)), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. (And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allaah and His Messenger (ﷺ), if you believe in Allaah and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination.]**⁴ He (Glorified be He) also says: **[And in whatsoever you differ, the decision thereof is with Allaah (He is the ruling Judge).]**⁵ And: **[Say (O Muhammad ﷺ to mankind): "If you (really) love Allaah then follow me (i.e. accept Islaamic Monotheism, follow the Qur'aan and the Sunnah), Allaah will love you and forgive you your sins.]**⁶

⁴ Soorah al-Nisaa [4:59]

⁵ Soorah al-Shoora [42:10]

⁶ Soorah al-Imraan [3:31]

Ruling on celebrating the Mid-Sha`ban Night

And: **[But no, by your Lord, they can have no Faith, until they make you (O Muhammad ﷺ) judge in all disputes between them, and find in themselves no resistance against your decisions, and accept (them) with full submission.]**⁷ In addition to that, there are many Ayahs supporting this principle. They are clear evidence of the obligation to refer the debatable issues to the Book of Allaah and to the Sunnah of His Messenger (peace be upon him) and the obligation to be pleased and satisfied with their rulings, and to know that this is one of the exigencies of faith that provides the best outcome for the people during this lifetime and in the Hereafter and the best in result, namely, the end result.

Al-Hafiz ibn Rajab (may Allaah be merciful to him) said in his book Lata'if al-Ma`arif with regard to this issue - after previous similar talk:

(Regarding the Mid-Sha`ban night, the followers from the people of the Levant, such as Khalid ibn Ma`dan, Makhul, Luqmaan ibn `Amir and others used to exalt it and exert their efforts therein to perform more acts of worship and people followed them with regard to its virtue and exaltation. It is said that some Israelite narrations and traditions were transmitted to them regarding the virtue of this night, and when this became widespread in countries, people differed regarding it, and therefore, some of them accepted it and agreed with them with regard to the glorification of this night, such as a group from the worshippers of the people of Basra and others. On the other hand, this act was denied by the majority of Muslim scholars of Al-Hijaz, such as `Ata' and Ibn Abou Mulaykah. It was transmitted by `Abdul-Rahmaan ibn Zayd ibn Aslam from the jurists of the people of Madeenah, and it was the opinion of the disciples of Imaam Maalik and others. They said that all these acts are mere Bid`ah. However, the scholars of the people of the Levant were divided regarding the way of celebrating it into two opinions:

First: It is Mustahab (desirable) to celebrate it collectively in the Masjids (mosques). It is reported that Khalid ibn Ma`dan and Luqmaan ibn `Amir and others used to put on their best clothes, apply incense and kohl (antimony powder eyeliner), and spend the entire night in the Masjid. Their act was approved by Ishaq ibn Rahawayh who said about celebrating it in congregation in the Masjid that it is not Bid`ah. This was reported by Harb Al-Kirmany in his book Al-Masa'il.

Second: It is Makrooh (disliked) to gather during that night in the Masjid for prayer, narrating stories and supplication, but it is not Makrooh for one to pray individually during that night. This is the opinion of Al-Awza`y who was the Imaam of the people of the Levant, their jurist and their scholar - and this, In'sha'allah (if Allaah wills), is the closest opinion to the truth - until he said: It is not known if Imaam Ahmad said something about the Mid-Sha`ban night. There are two narrations reported from Al-Awza`iy regarding the recommendation to stay up late for prayer during the Mid-Sha`ban night relying on the two

⁷ Soorah al-Nisaa [4:659]

Ruling on celebrating the Mid-Sha`ban Night

narrations reported from Imaam Ahmad regarding staying up late for prayer during the two nights of `Eed. In one narration, he did not recommend staying up late in congregational prayer during the two nights of `Eed because it was not reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) or from his Sahaabah that they did that. In another narration he recommended staying up late for prayer during those nights following the act of `Abdul-Rahmaan ibn Yazeed ibn Al-Aswad, who was one of the Tabi`oon (Followers, the generation after the Companions of the Prophet). By the same token, there is no sound and authentic narration reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) or his Sahaabah regarding staying up late for prayer during the Mid-Sha`ban night. However, it is reported from a group of the Tabi`oon from among the noble jurists of the people of the Levant.)

This is the end of the statement of Al-Hafiz ibn Rajab (may Allaah be merciful to him), which clearly states that no sound and authentic narration was reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) or from his Sahaabah (may Allaah be merciful to them) regarding the Mid-Sha`ban night. As for the opinion chosen by Al-Awza`y (may Allaah be merciful to him) regarding the recommendation of staying up late for individual prayer during the Mid-Sha`ban night and Al-Hafiz Ibn Rajab's preference of this opinion, it is strange and weak, because if something has not been established by the Shar'eh (Islamic legal) evidence that it is legitimate, then it is not allowed for a Muslim to introduce it into the Religion of Allaah, whether one does it individually or in congregation, and whether one practices it secretly or openly, due to the comprehensiveness of the words of the Prophet (peace be upon him), saying: **[Anyone who does an action which is not in accordance with this matter of ours (Islam) will have it rejected.]**⁸ This is in addition to other pieces of evidence indicating the rejection of Bid`ahs and warning against them.

It is also reported from Imaam Aboo Bakr Al-Tartushy (may Allaah be merciful to him) in his book Al-Hawadith Wal-Bida` that he said:

(It is reported by Ibn Waddah from Zayd ibn Aslam that he said: We have not found anyone from our Shaykhs or jurists paying attention to the Mid-Sha`ban night. Moreover, they did not pay attention to the Hadeeth reported by Makhul, and they did not consider any special virtue for this night to the exclusion of other nights.) Moreover, it was said to Ibn Aboo Mulaykah that Ziyad Al-Numayry said: Verily, the reward of the Mid-Sha`ban night is like the reward of Laylat-ul-Qadr (the Night of Decree). He commented, saying: If I hear him saying this and I have a staff in my hand, I will hit him. It is noteworthy that Ziyad was a narrator of stories. End of the statement of Aboo Bakr Al-Tartushy.

Furthermore, the erudite scholar Al-Shawkaanee (may Allaah be merciful to him), in his book entitled Al-Fawa'id Al-Majmu`ah, said:

⁸ Sunan Ibn Maajah

Ruling on celebrating the Mid-Sha`ban Night

Concerning the Hadeeth: O `Alee, whoever prays a hundred Rak`ahs (units of Prayer) during the Mid-Sha`ban night and reads in every Rak`ah Al-Fatihah (the Opening Chapter of the Book) and Soorah Ikhlas ten times, Allaah will fulfil all their needs. It is a fabricated Hadeeth. Its words talking about the great reward for the one who performs this prayer does not leave any doubt for a sound-minded person that it is a fabricated Hadeeth. Moreover, its narrators are unknown. It has been reported through second and third narrations, all of which are inserted fabrications and their narrators are unknown. It is also said in Al-Mukhtasar that the Hadeeth of performing prayer during the Mid-Sha`ban night is null. Also, the Hadeeth reported by Ibn Hibbaan on the authority of `Alee: When the middle night of Sha`ban comes, observe night vigil prayer during it and fast the following day is a weak Hadeeth. It was also stated in Al-La'ali' that the Hadeeth stating: Praying one hundred Rak`ahs during the Mid-Sha`ban night with Soorah al-Ikhlas recited ten times each... along with the rest of the details about its virtue, which is reported by Al-Daylamiy and others, is a false Hadeeth, and all its narrators in the three different narrations are unknown and weak. He said that the Hadeeth: And praying twelve Rak`ahs in which Soorah Al-Ikhlas is recited thirty times... is a fabricated Hadeeth, and the Hadeeth: ...and fourteen Rak`ahs... is also a false Hadeeth.

It is noted that a group of jurists were deceived by this Hadeeth, such as the author of the book Al-'Ihya' and others, as well as some exegetes of the Qur'aan. Performing prayer on this night - namely, the Mid-Sha`ban night - has been reported through different chains of transmissions, all of which are null and fabricated. This does not contradict the Hadeeth reported by Al-Tirmidhee on the authority of `Aishah regarding the Prophet's going to Al-Baqi` and the descending of the Lord to the nearest sky during the Mid-Sha`ban night and that He forgives more people than the number of the hairs on the sheep of Banu Kalb, since we are talking about this prayer which has been falsely established in that night. Moreover, the Hadeeth reported by `Aishah contains weakness and its chain of transmission is interrupted. Also, the Hadeeth reported by `Alee, which has been previously mentioned with regard to staying up late during that night for prayer, does not contradict the ruling that a special prayer during that night is a false practice, in addition to the weakness in that Hadeeth based on what we have mentioned.) End of Al-Shawkanee's comment.

It is reported from Al-Hafiz Al-`Iraquee that he said: (The Hadeeth of performing prayer during the Mid-Sha`ban night is falsely ascribed to the Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) and is a lie about him. Moreover, it is reported by Al-Imaam al-Nawawee that he said in the book entitled Al-Majmoo`: The prayer known as Salat-ul-Ragha'ib (Prayer for great bounties or wishes), which is twelve Rak`ahs performed between the Maghrib (Sunset) Prayer and 'Isha' (Night) Prayer during the night of the first Friday of the month of Rajab, and the prayer during the Mid-Sha`ban night, which is a hundred Rak`ahs, are two evil Bid`ahs (innovations in religion) and no one should be deceived by their mentioning in the book entitled Qut a-Qulub and the book entitled Ihya' `Uloom ad-Deen nor by the Hadeeth reported regarding

Ruling on celebrating the Mid-Sha`ban Night

these two nights, since all this is void and no one should be deceived by some of the Imaams who got confused about their ruling and wrote some papers regarding the recommended practices during these two nights, because they made a mistake in that).

On the other hand, the Shaykh and Imaam Aboo Muhammad `Abdul-Rahmaan ibn Ismaa`eel al-Maqdisee wrote a very valuable book regarding the falsity of the special virtues of these two nights and he did a good job in this book. Moreover, people of knowledge talked very much about this issue, and if we trace all what has been said regarding this subject and try to convey it, then we will have a very long explanation, but we hope that what we have mentioned regarding this issue will be sufficient and convincing for the seekers of truth.

It becomes clear to the seekers of the truth from the Ayahs, Hadeeths, and the opinions of Muslim scholars mentioned previously that celebrating the Mid-Sha`ban night through performing prayer and other activities and singling out the following day with Sawm (Fasting) is an evil Bid`ah, according to the opinion of the majority of Muslim scholars. It has no foundation in the purified Islaamic Sharee'ah` (law), but it has been newly introduced into Islaam after the epoch of the Sahaabah (may Allaah be pleased with all of them). It is sufficient for the seekers of truth, about this subject and other subjects, to read Allaah's Words: **[This day, I have perfected your religion for you.]**⁹ There are other Ayahs confirming this meaning, as well as the Prophet's saying: **[Anyone who introduces anything into this matter of ours (Islaam) that is not part of it will have it rejected.]**¹⁰ This is in addition to other Hadeeths confirming this meaning. Moreover, it was reported in Saheeh Muslim from Aboo Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) said: **[Do not single out the night of Friday [i.e. Thursday night] among the nights for prayer and do not single out Friday among days for fasting, but only when anyone among you is accustomed to observe Sawm (on dates) which coincide with this day (Friday).]**¹¹ If it is allowed to single out a certain night with a special worship, then the night of Friday will be more deserving of this special worship, because its day is the best day on which the sun rises according to the sound and authentic Hadeeth reported from the Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him). Since the Prophet (peace be upon him) warned against singling out this night with special prayer to the exclusion of other nights, then it is evidence that other nights should not be singled out with a certain type of worship unless there is sound and authentic evidence indicating such specification.

Since it is legitimate to stay up late for prayer during Laylat-ul-Qadr (the Night of Decree) and during other nights of Ramadhaan, the Prophet (peace be upon him) drew the attention to that, encouraged the Ummah to do that and did it himself as reported in the Two Saheeh Books of Hadeeth from the Prophet (peace be upon him) that he said: **[Whoever observes Qiyam**

⁹ Soorah al-Nisaa [5:3]

¹⁰ Saheeh al-Bukhaaree 2697, Saheeh Muslim 1718

¹¹ Saheeh Muslim 1144

Ruling on celebrating the Mid-Sha`ban Night

(Optional Night Prayer) during the month of Ramadhaan out of sincere faith and hoping for reward from Allaah, all their past sins will be forgiven, and whoever observes Qiyam in the night of Qadr out of sincere faith and hoping for reward from Allaah, all their past sins will be forgiven.]¹² Thus, if the Mid-Sha`ban night, the night of the first Friday of Rajab, or the night of Isra' (Night Journey) and Mi`raj (Ascension to Heaven) were singled out with a certain type of worship, the Prophet (peace be upon him) would guide the Ummah to it or would do it himself, and if something like this had happened, the Sahaabah (may Allaah be pleased with all of them) would have transmitted it to the Ummah and would not conceal it from the following generations since they were the best people and the best in giving advice after the Prophets (peace be upon all of them). May Allaah be pleased with the Sahaabah and may He please them. You have already known from the opinions of Muslim scholars that nothing has been established from the Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) nor from his Sahaabah (may Allaah be pleased with all of them) regarding the virtue of the night of the first Friday of Rajab or of the Mid-Sha`ban night, and therefore, it becomes clear that celebrating both of them is a Bid`ah newly introduced in the religion. By the same token, singling them out with a special worship is an evil Bid`ah. The same ruling applies to the twenty-seventh night of Rajab, which some people believe is the night of Al-Isra' and Mi`raj, it should not be singled out with a certain worship and it is not allowed to celebrate it due to the above-mentioned evidence. This is the ruling if we know when Al-Isra' and Mi`raj happened, how will it be if this night is unknown, according to the correct view of Muslim scholars. Claiming that it is the twenty-seventh night of Rajab is a false opinion having no basis in the sound and authentic Hadeeths. Indeed, they are good words that say: **The best affairs are those previously established on true guidance and the worst of them are the newly introduced in religion.**

We ask Allaah to guide us and all Muslims to abide by the Sunnah, to be steadfast in it, and to be cautious of what contradicts it. Indeed, He is the Most Bounteous and Generous. May Allaah send His Peace and Blessings upon His Servant and Messenger, our Prophet Muhammad, his family and all his Companions.

¹² Sunan an-Nasaa'ee