

# Ramadān with the Holy Prophet ﷺ

## A short discourse on how the Prophet ﷺ spent the month of Ramadān

If I was to ask somebody, why do you fast? Most people really don't know why they are doing it, so they will say something straight forward - to remember what poor people experience. Whilst this may be an effect during fasting, it is not the purpose. We should always remember the poor inside and outside of Ramadān. The purpose and spirit of Ramadān has been lost in a mist – it has become all about food. When fasting one's mind is on the food and when it is opened the consumption of food is so much that it far exceeds normal levels of consumption. There will be many different varieties of food available, cooked in many different ways, the air will be filled with exotic spices, there will be somebody distributing dates to everyone – a person's house will be a scene befitting the markets of Marrakech. In fact, many people actually believe that the month of Ramadān is a cultural practice wherein people look forward to specially prepared meals in the evening and enjoy each other's company whilst sharing the food. Whilst all this is all well and good, it is not what Ramadān is about. The practices of people have led them to fulfill their desires to a greater extent in Ramadān than outside, which leads to them having wasted the precious moments which Allah Most High has gifted us all with.

There are also those, who on the one hand extol the benefits of fasting during a *Da'wah* propagation, only to behind closed doors spend the best part of the day sleeping. At *Iftāri* and *Suhoor*, they will eat three meals in one go at an utterly bewildering speed. Should time permit, even more food will be consumed after the Taraweeh. The Taraweeh prayer itself is prayed for the first two days of the month or maybe a week if we are feeling slightly religious. People gain weight not only physically but also in spiritual darkness. All of this can be attributed to the essence of the month being lost in our hearts, our minds and our actions, that essence, which is the practice of the Prophet ﷺ during this month. This essence brings to fruition the whole spirit and purpose of the month of Ramadān – to draw nearer to Allah Almighty.

Allah Most High has made the way easy to Him in this month, reward for good is increased many times over, sins are forgiven, the doors of His mercy are wide open - there is no need to knock, we can walk straight through. However, we have closed our own doors and expect the mercy of Allah to come knocking on our doors instead. One should remember that many blessings are bestowed in abundance during this month. All that we are asked is that we abstain from and put aside our desire for food, drink and sexual fulfillment during the hours of daylight. To remain in a state of *Taqwa* (God Consciousness)

and *Wara* (Abstinence from excess in consumption and other such things) for the entire period – day and night. Base desires are an obstacle between the human and Allah, so we are required to keep it on a leash and put Allah before everything else so that our hearts may be reinforced in piety.

We hope that this short article will provide the reader with some useful information to build enthusiasm and knowledge. We shall set out a discourse on the practices of the best of creation, the master of humankind and the world of the Jinns, the beloved of Allah ﷺ. Indeed his actions are the best of actions and are a model for us all to emulate.

### **Ma'mulāt e Nabawwi – The matters of the Prophet ﷺ**

The Holy Prophet ﷺ would spend the month of Ramadān performing the following five actions:

1. **Sawm** - Fasting during the day.
2. **Qiyām-ul-Layl** – The night vigil.
3. **Khatam-ul-Qur'ān** - Completing the Qur'ān.
4. **I'tikāf** – Seclusion.
5. **Tahajjud** – Prayer.
6. **Sadaqah** - Voluntary Charity.

#### **1. Sawm - Fasting**

##### Supplication

The Prophet ﷺ loved the month of Ramadān and always prayed to reach it. He would start its preparation in the month of Sha'bān by fasting in that month. When the month of Rajab started the Prophet ﷺ used to perform this *Du'ā*:

عن أنس بن مالك قال: كان رسول الله صل الله عليه وسلم إذا دخل رجب قال: اللهم بارك لنا في رجب و شعبان و بلغنا رمضان

*“Anas Bin Malik reports that the Prophet ﷺ used to perform this du'ā when the month of Rajab started, ‘O Allah bless our Rajab and Sha'bān and make us reach the month of Ramadān”*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Mu'jam Al-Awsat*, vol.4, p.558, Hadith no.3951; *Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal*, vol.1, 259

And when the Prophet ﷺ saw the crescent moon of Ramadān he would supplicate with the following Du'ā:

كان إذا راي هلال رمضان قال: هلال رشد و خير، هلال رشد و خير أمنت بالذي خلقك

*“Anas Bin Malik reports that the Prophet ﷺ used to say ‘This is the crescent of guidance and blessing. I believed in the one who created you.’”<sup>2</sup>*

We ought to recite the above Du'ā when we receive the news that the month of Ramadān has started.

### Welcoming the month of Ramadān

To demonstrate the importance of the month of Ramadān the Prophet ﷺ would ask the companions, who are you welcoming this month and who is welcoming you? Which month are you welcoming and which month is welcoming you? After the Prophet ﷺ asked this three times, our master 'Umar ؓ asked, O Messenger of Allah ﷺ, are we expecting some revelation or a war or a struggle with an enemy? And the Prophet ﷺ replied, No, nothing of the sort. You are welcoming the month in which Allah indeed forgives all of the people of the Qiblah (the believers) in the first night of this month.<sup>3</sup>

### Preparation for the physical effort of Fasting

The Prophet ﷺ used to fast in the month of Sha'bān to prepare for fasting in the month of Ramadān. 'A'isha ؓ reports: *“The Prophet ﷺ used to fast continuously in the month of Sha'bān until the month of Ramadān used to come.”*<sup>4</sup>

Imām Ahmad ؓ and Imām Nisā'i ؓ narrated in their compilations of Hadith that Umm Salma ؓ reported: *“The Prophet ﷺ used to fast continuously for two months – Sha'bān and Ramadān.”*<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Musnad Ibn Abi Shaybah*, vol.10, p.400, Hadith no. 9798; *Al-Mu'jam Al-Awsat*, vol.1, p.212, Hadith no. 313

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Targheeb wa Tarheeb*, 2:105

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Mu'jam Al-Awsat*, vol.2, p.460, Hadith no. 1794, also at 9:110, Hadith no. 8228

<sup>5</sup> *Sunan Al-Nisā'ee*, vol.1, p.305/306, 'Book on Fasting', Hadith no. 2175; *Musnad Ahmad*, 2:300

## Suhoor and Iftār – The early morning meal and breaking of the fast at Sunset

Anas Bin Malik رضي الله عنه reported, that the Prophet ﷺ said:

قال رسول الله صل الله عليه وسلام تسحروا فان في السحور بركة

*“Have the Suhoor for there are blessings in the Suhoor.”<sup>6</sup>*

And Imām Muslim رضي الله عنه narrates that ‘Amr bin Al ‘Âs رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said *“The difference between ours and the fasting of the people of the book is the Suhoor.”<sup>7</sup>*

Abu Sa’eed Al Khudri رضي الله عنه reported and Imām Ahmad رضي الله عنه narrates in his *Musnad* that the Prophet ﷺ said: *“All of the Suhoor is a blessing, never miss it.”<sup>8</sup>* Every little ounce of the Halāl Suhoor or Sehri meal is a blessing regardless of what type of food or drink it is. Imām Ahmad رضي الله عنه also narrates in his *Musnad*, the Prophet ﷺ said:

فان الله و ملائكته يصلون على المستحرين

*“Allah and the Angels send blessings upon those who have the Suhoor.”<sup>9</sup>*

This is a special blessing which is only present in the Suhoor during the month of Ramadān. Outside of Ramadān the Suhoor would not carry such a heavy weight. The Suhoor of Ramadān is so blessed that the Prophet ﷺ said that we should have Suhoor even if it is a single sip of water. It is a Sunnah to have the Suhoor and the Prophet ﷺ never gave it up.

## The meaning of Barakāt (blessings) in relation to the Suhoor

Imām Ibn Humām رضي الله عنه said that *Barakah* means to gain strength for the fasting of the day. It is narrated in Sunan Ibn Mājah that the Prophet ﷺ said *“Gain strength from the food of Suhoor for the fasting of the day. For the night vigil; get the strength from a midday sleep.”<sup>10</sup>*

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<sup>6</sup> *Sahih Bukhāri*, 1:287, ‘Book on Fasting’ and ‘Chapter on the blessings of the Suhoor’, Hadith no. 1823

<sup>7</sup> *Sahih Muslim*, ‘Book on Fasting’ and ‘Chapter on the benefits of the Suhoor’, Hadith no. 1096

<sup>8</sup> *Musnad Ahmad*, 3:12

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

Imām Nawawi رحمته الله explains that there is Barakāt in Suhoor for the following reasons:

1. Energy – The Suhoor makes you strong for fasting;
2. Enthusiasm - It creates excitement;
3. Encouragement - It inclines you to do more work during the day;
4. It makes you get up in the early morning before dawn and allows you stay up at night. That is the time for remembrance of Allah and supplication. So it makes you wake up at that time which is a time of acceptance, of mercy and of forgiveness. (*Sharh Al-Nawawi*)

Imām Nawawi رحمته الله has given forgiveness, acceptance of supplication, the mercy of Allah, remembrance of Allah, energy, enthusiasm and encouragement as the various forms of Barakāt that are realized through the Suhoor.

Imām Ibn Hajar ‘Asqalāni رحمته الله says *‘there are a lot of blessings in Suhoor as, above all things you are following a Sunnah. It gives us a distinction from the people of the Jews and the Christians. It also provides you with the strength needed for worship, and the strength for more work. Hunger produces bad manners and with Suhoor that is reduced. There are additional blessings when another person can join you for the Suhoor.’*

#### Delaying the Suhoor and breaking the fast as early as possible

Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه says *“Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم commanded us to break the fast as soon as the time comes and to delay our Suhoor towards the end of its time.”<sup>11</sup>*

When a person is hungry, the mind can become occupied by the lower self to such an extent that the person may start to display bad manners. This may then in turn lead to a person becoming excessive when the time comes to break the fast. This will only increase the desire for food even more and increase impatience for it during the fast. Therefore the spirit of the fast would have been lost. Ibn Daqeeq Al ‘Id رحمته الله says that *‘the purpose of fasting is to control the stomach, your private parts, to learn discipline and control of desires. If someone eats too much then the purpose of the fasting has gone.’* Eat little so that your lower self will start to reveal itself and so that you may fight with it, and with this struggle there will be great reward – a platform for the purification of the heart.

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibn Mājah*, p.123, ‘Book on Fasting’, Hadith no. 1693

<sup>11</sup> *Sunan Al Kubra*, 4: 238

Another point worth mentioning is the speed at which food is consumed at Iftāri. It has become the practice of people, at the time of Iftār, to consume a huge amount of food in record time in the false belief that they must finish everything at top speed, as there is only five minutes for Maghrib. This is a false notion. In fact, according to the Hanafi jurists if there is food on the table then it is Wājib to eat the food and delay the prayer. The reason for this is that if your mind is occupied by food then you are not present in your prayer. It is advisable that the iftār is done properly with proper table etiquettes, as per the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ and the Maghrib prayer delayed by up to 20 minutes to allow for this.

## 2. Qiyam-ul-Layl – Night Vigil

The Prophet ﷺ used to pray most of the nights of the month of Ramadān, engage in *Dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) and recite the Holy Qur’ān.

It is narrated in Sunan An-Nisā’i that the Prophet ﷺ said, *“Whoever fasts during the night and has night vigil with belief, love and accountability he will go out of sins like his mother has given birth to him today.”*<sup>12</sup>

The Prophet ﷺ offered Taraweeh prayers individually at home and with the Jama’at in the mosque. So to perform it with Jama’at is a Sunnah for the community. If nobody in the community performs it in Jama’at, then everyone is considered sinful for not performing it. If there is at least one Jama’at of the Taraweeh in the community then the Sunnah has been fulfilled. There is consensus of the Ummah on this matter. It is important for everyone to go the mosque and pray Taraweeh in Jama’at. The word ‘Taraweeh’ itself is from the word ‘Tarweehaa’, meaning to rest. Indeed there needs to be a rest during the Taraweeh prayer. After every four cycles sit for a rest in which one should perform Tasbeeh, Dhikr and Duood on the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Rushing through the rest period is not correct, people should be given a few moments to sit and recite the Tasbeeh in ease. There should be water available in every row and aisle of the congregation so that people can refresh should they need to.

## 3. Khatam-ul-Qur’ān – Completion of the Qur’ān

The Holy Prophet ﷺ, scholars, jurists and the righteous people of the past used to finish the Holy Qur’ān in the month of Ramadān. Imām Abu Hanīfah ؒ said that we should read at least ten verses in each

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<sup>12</sup> 1:308, ‘Book on Fasting’, Hadith no. 2208

cycle of the Taraweeh prayers. There are over six-thousand verses in the Holy Qur'ān. In twenty-nine or thirty days we pray up to six hundred cycles of Taraweeh and if in each cycle we read ten verses then we will finish the Qur'ān easily. Our master 'Umar رضي الله عنه, used to read twenty to twenty-five verses in every cycle.

Also remember that the verses of the Qur'ān must be recited in Tarteel –recitation in a slow, melodious and beautiful manner.<sup>13</sup>

The Beloved Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to finish the Holy Qur'ān once in the whole month of Ramadān. Otherwise he could have finished it thousands of times a day. According to Mulla 'Ali Qāri in *Mirqāt ul Mafateeh*<sup>14</sup>, our Master 'Ali (K) used to start the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān whilst he would put one foot on one side of the horse's saddle and finish the whole Qur'ān in that time that it took to put his other foot at the other side. If our Master 'Ali (K) could do this then there is no doubt that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم could have finished it many thousands of times. However, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not do this in order to keep it easy for us otherwise we would have had a very difficult Sunnah to fulfill.

In every month of Ramadān, the Angel Jibreel عليه السلام used to come to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and recite the Qur'ān to him whilst the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would listen to him recite. Then the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would recite to Jibreel عليه السلام and Jibreel عليه السلام would listen to Rasool'Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم recite. The Qur'ān would always be completed once by the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and Jibreel عليه السلام during the month of Ramadān. However, in the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم last year of this life he finished the Qur'ān twice in the month of Ramadān. Jibreel عليه السلام recited to Rasool'Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم and Rasool'Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم recited to Jibreel عليه السلام and this process was completed twice. This is recorded in the Sahih collections of Imām Bukhāri and Imām Muslim. This is the model that the Huffāz – those who have memorized the Qur'ān, should follow. They should form groups during this month and recite the entire Qur'ān to each other at least once.

#### 4. I'tikāf – Seclusion

It is narrated by Imām Bukhāri رحمته الله and Imām Muslim رحمته الله that the Holy Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم practice was that most of the time he would enter in to I'tikāf in the last ten days of Ramadān. However, sometimes he would

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<sup>13</sup> See: Surah Muzzammil, verse 4

<sup>14</sup> At vol5 p344

enter I'tikāf in the first and second ten days, i.e. for the first twenty days. *“The Prophet ﷺ entered into I'tikāf in the first and second ten days of Ramadān. In the last year of his life he went in to I'tikāf in the last twenty days.”*<sup>15</sup>

## 5. Tahajjud

The Prophet ﷺ used to pray Tahajjud regularly in the whole year but in this month special arrangements were made. The Prophet ﷺ would read eight cycles of Tahajjud followed by three *Witr* and so eleven *rakāts* were offered all together. However, some of the saints have recommended twelve *rakāts* of Nafil should be prayed for Tahajjud. In a configuration of six sets of two *rakāts*. In the first *rakāt* of the first set, one is to recite Surat-ul-Ikhlās<sup>16</sup> twelve times after Al-Fāthiha. In each *rakāt*, Surat-ul-Ikhlās should be recited one less time than the previous *rakāt*. So in the second *rakāt*, we would recite Surat-ul-Ikhlās eleven times and ten times in the third *rakāt* and so on until you reach the twelfth and final *rakāt* in which Surat-ul-Ikhlās would be recited once.

Another way is to recite Surat-ul-Ikhlās once in the first *rakāt* and increment by one in each *rakāt* until we reach the final *rakāt* in which Surat-ul-Ikhlās should be recited twelve times.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ performed the Tahajjud prayer in many different ways to allow for some flexibility for the prayer. You can offer whatever is easiest for you from two to twelve cycles. Ensure that you pray Tahajjud even it means reciting just two *rakāts*. Imām Tirmidhi ﷺ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

عليكم بقيام الليل فانه داب الصالحين قبلكم

*“The Tahajjud is recommended for you as this is the way of pious people.”*<sup>17</sup>

The Prophet ﷺ also said: *“The honor of the believer is in the Tahajjud prayer, he does not look at what is in the hands of people.”* Once one makes it a habit to pray during the night, Allah will make that person indifferent to what people have in their hands - they will be truly independent. The Beloved Prophet ﷺ also said:

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<sup>15</sup> *Sahih Bukhāri*, 1:271, ‘Book on Seclusion’, Hadith no. 1922

<sup>16</sup> Chapter of Al-Qur’ān, 112

<sup>17</sup> *Sunan Al-Tirmidhi*, 2:194, ‘Book on prayers’, Hadith no. 3549

شرف المؤمن صلاته بالليل واستغناؤه في ايدن الناس

*“The honor and respect of the faithful is in Tahajjud and his freedom of what people posses.”<sup>18</sup>*

A person is given honor by Allah Almighty for the regular performance of Tahajjud. By this honor the person is granted independence from all of creation and all hope and trust is in Allah alone. Thus the person will be respected as a righteous and honorable person.

Imām Bayhaqi narrated that Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

إشراف امي حملة القران والاصحاب الليل

*“The Ashrāf (the most honorable) of my Ummah are those who are the carriers of the Qur’ān and perform regular night prayers and hold the night vigil.”<sup>19</sup>*

## 6. Sadaqah - Voluntary Charity

It is commendable to give voluntarily charity in abundance during this blessed month. It was the habit of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم outside of Ramadān to never leave people empty. However, in the month of Ramadān his charity would be like the wind. Just like the wind reaches everywhere so would the charity of the Beloved Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Imām Bukhāri رحمته الله narrates *“When Jibreel عليه السلام used to meet Rasool’Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم the Prophet’s صلى الله عليه وسلم charity was so that the blowing wind was not able to compete with it”<sup>20</sup>.*

Please note that Sadaqah is not Zakāt, Sadaqah is voluntary whereas Zakāt is a fixed and compulsory amount which must be paid to those who are eligible for it. It has become the norm of people to hold on for Ramadān and pay the Zakāt that is due on them in this month. Whilst it is no doubt that the Zakāt has been paid, it is worth remembering that this is a compulsory act that has been accomplished. The emphasis in Ramadān is to undertake as many additional and voluntarily acts of worship as possible. Therefore one should be exceedingly generous and give more than just the Zakāt.

It is narrated in the Book of Revelation in the Sahih collection of Imām Bukhāri رحمته الله *“Allah’s apostle was the most generous of people and he used to reach the peak of generosity in the month of Ramadān.”*

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<sup>18</sup> *Silsilah Al-Ahādith-us-Sahihyyah*, 4:526, Hadith no. 1903

<sup>19</sup> *Sha’bul Imān*, 2:557, Hadith no. 2703

<sup>20</sup> *Sahih Bukhāri*, 1:255, ‘Book on Fasting’, Hadith no. 1803, reported by ‘Ibn ‘Abbās

Imām Nawawi رحمته الله says in *Sharh Al-Nawawi* in relation to this Hadith, “There are many benefits and merits mentioned in this Hadith. Firstly, there is great generosity itself and secondly in the month of Ramadān generosity should be greater. Thirdly, when you meet pious people then generosity should be uncontrollable towards them. Fourthly, have generosity in the pleasure of having met good people, (i.e. after having met them one should be exceedingly happy at having met a pious person). Fifth, to establish schools for the Qur’ān as Jibreel عليه السلام came to teach the Qur’ān and the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would give generously.”

These are the six acts that the Beloved Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم held to during the month of Ramadān throughout his blessed life. **Sawm** – Fasting; **Qiyām-ul-Layl** - Night Vigil; **Khatm-ul-Qur’ān** - Completion of the Qur’ān; **I’tikāf** – Seclusion; and **Sadaqah** – Voluntary charity. Hold on to these actions of the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم tightly so that we may benefit from the abundant blessings on offer during the month of Ramadān. And so that we may perhaps realise the purpose of the month and draw nearer to Allah Most High.

By Ayub Anwar

Based on the works of Shaykh-ul-Islam Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri.