

FRIDAY MESSAGE

ISSUE 256

FRIDAY 31 JANUARY 2025, 8 SHABAN 1446

The month of Sha'ban often finds itself overshadowed by the grandeur of Rajab and the anticipation of Ramadan. Yet, scholars emphasize its significance as a valuable period for reflection, spiritual preparation, and increased devotion

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) highlighted the virtue of Sha'ban, noting that people often neglect it. He said, "That is a month that people neglect between Rajab and Ramadan, and it is a month in which deeds are raised up to the Lord of the Worlds, so I like my deeds to be raised up while I am fasting."

This emphasises Sha'ban as a time for increased fasting and righteous deeds, preparing the heart and soul for the spiritual rigours of Ramadan.

Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) fasted more in Sha'ban than in any other month besides Ramadan. This act can be likened to a farmer preparing the soil before planting the main crop. Just as the farmer tills and fertilizes the land, Muslims should utilize Sha'ban to cultivate their hearts and prepare them for the bountiful harvest of Ramadan's blessings.

Scholars explain that fasting in Sha'ban is akin to the Sunnah prayers that accompany the obligatory prayers, a means of drawing closer to Allah and compensating for any shortcomings in one's obligatory worship.

Think of it as warming up before a big race. Just as athletes train and condition their bodies, Muslims should use Sha'ban to strengthen their spiritual muscles, preparing themselves for the increased demands of Ramadan.

Sha'ban, therefore, is a month for introspection, seeking forgiveness, and strengthening our connection with Allah. It is a time to prepare for Ramadan by focusing on sincere devotion, avoiding innovations, and purifying our hearts from all forms of negativity. It is a time for self-assessment. Just as a merchant takes stock of his inventory, we should take stock of our deeds and intentions, seeking to rectify any shortcomings.

By understanding the true significance of Sha'ban, we can maximize its blessings and enter Ramadan with renewed spiritual vigour, ready to embrace the month of the Quran and immerse ourselves in acts of worship.

Usama ibn Zaid (Allah be pleased with him) asked the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him): "O Messenger of Allah, I have not seen you fast in any month of the year like you fast in Sha'ban." The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "That is a month that people neglect between Rajab and Ramadan, and it is a month in which deeds are raised to Allah the Almighty, so I love for my deeds to be raised while I am fasting. (Nasai and Ahmad)

Aisha: "The Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah 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 Allah fasting for an entire month except in Ramadan, and I never saw him fast more than he did in Sha'ban." (Bukhari & Muslim)

When your deeds are raised and presented to Allah- the Most High - then what do you choose for yourself to be presented to Him? What is accepted or what is rejected? What is a cause for abundant reward or little reward?

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) chose fasting. Raising of the deeds to Allah while fasting is more likely to be accepted by him and more beloved to him.

The Hadith encourages us to make the most of times when people tend to be distracted, using these moments for prayer and remembrance of Allah. This practice is considered highly commendable.

For example, some of our pious predecessors would dedicate the time between Maghrib and Isha prayers to extra prayer, recognizing it as a period when many people were less focused on worship.

Similarly, remembering Allah in the marketplace is especially valuable because it allows us to connect with Him in a place where people are often preoccupied with worldly concerns.

By seizing these opportunities for worship, we can deepen our connection with Allah and earn His blessings.

Nasr ibn Muhammad al-Samarqandi said: "It is said: 'People wake up in three categories:

A category seeking wealth, a category seeking sin, and a category on the path. As for the one who wakes up seeking wealth, he will not eat more than what Allah has allotted for him, even if he amasses much wealth. And whoever wakes up seeking sin, humiliation and sin will catch up with him. And whoever wakes up seeking the path, Allah- the Most High - will grant him provision and the path.'"

So consider, my dear Muslim, which category are you in?

Salman al-Farsi (Allah be pleased with him) said: "Three things amazed me until they made me laugh: One who hopes for the world while death seeks him, one who is heedless while he is not neglected, and one who laughs heartily while he does not know if the Lord of the Worlds is pleased with him or angry!"

Although there are no authentic Hadith on the virtues of the 15th Night of Sha'ban(also known as Laylat al-Nisf min Sha'ban and Laylatul Bar'aah) as a whole, the month of Sha'ban should be utilised for voluntary (Nawafil) acts of worship in preparation for Ramadan.

Fasting after the 15th of Sha'ban: Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "When Sha'ban is half over, do not fast." (Abu Dawud al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah)

Fasting in the second half of Sha'ban, i.e. after the 15th of Sha'ban, is not permitted, except for someone who has the habit of fasting regularly or who is making up a missed obligatory fast.

Based on this, it is not allowed to initiate a new fasting in the second half of Sha'ban, as this may lead to weakness and fatigue and negatively affect the fasting in the month of Ramadan.