

Ruling on celebrating the middle of Sha'baan

By: Sheikh

Muhammed Salih Al-Munajjid

Praise be to Allaah Who has perfected our religion for us, and has completed His favor upon us. And blessings and peace be upon His Prophet and Messenger Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, the Prophet of repentance and mercy.

Allaah Says (what means):

- {"*This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islaam as your religion*" } [Qur'aan, 5:3]
- {"*Or have they partners with Allaah (false gods) who have instituted for them a religion which Allaah has not ordained?*" } [Qur'aan, 42:21]

In the books of Al-Bukhaari and Muslim, it is reported from 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: "**Whoever innovates something in this matter of ours [Islaam] that is not part of it, will have it rejected.**"

In *Saheeh Muslim* it is narrated from Jaabir, may Allaah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, used to say in his Friday *Khutbahs* (sermons): "**The best of speech is the Book of Allaah and the best of guidance is the guidance of Muhammad. The most evil of things are those which are newly-invented, and every innovation (*Bid'ah*) is a going-astray.**"

There are many *Aayaat* and *Ahaadeeth* which say similar things.

This clearly indicates that Allaah has perfected the religion of this *Ummah* (nation), and completed His favor upon them. He did not take the soul of His Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, until he had conveyed the Message clearly and explained to the *Ummah* (Muslim nation) everything that Allaah had prescribed for it of words and deeds. He, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, explained that everything that people would innovate after he was gone, all the words and deeds that they would attribute to Islaam, all of that would be thrown back on the one who invented it, even if his intention was good. The Companions of the Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, knew this matter, as did the scholars of Islaam after them. They denounced *Bid'ah* and warned against it, as has been stated by all those who wrote books praising the *Sunnah* and denouncing *Bid'ah*, such as Ibn Waddaah, al-Tartooshi, Ibn Shaamah and others, may Allaah have mercy on them all.

Among the *Bid'ahs* that have been invented by some people is celebrating the middle of *Sha'baan* (*Laylat al-Nusf min Sha'baan*), and singling out that day for fasting. There is no evidence (*Daleel*) for that which can be regarded as reliable. Some *Dha'eef* (weak) narrations have been narrated concerning its virtues, but we cannot regard them as reliable. The reports which have been narrated concerning the virtues of prayer on this occasion are all *Mawdoo'* (fabricated), as has been pointed out by many of the scholars.

We will quote some of their comments below, Allaah willing.

Some reports have also been narrated on this matter from some of the *Salaf* in Syria, and others. What the majority of scholars say is that celebrating this occasion is *Bid'ah*, and that the narrations concerning the virtues of this occasion are all *Dha'eef* (weak), and some of them are *Mawdhoo'* (fabricated). Among those who pointed this out was al-Haafith Ibn Rajab, may

Allaah have mercy on him, in his book *Lataa'if al-Ma'aarif*, and others. The *Dha'eef* narrations concerning acts of worship can only be acted upon in the case of acts of worship which are proven by *Saheeh* (authentic) evidence. There is no authentic basis for celebrating the middle of *Sha'baan*, so we cannot follow the *Dha'eef* narrations either.

This important principle was mentioned by Imaam Abu al-'Abbaas Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him.

The scholars, may Allaah have mercy on them, agreed that it is obligatory to refer matters concerning which the people dispute to the Book of Allaah and the *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allaah, *sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*. Whatever ruling is given by both or one of them is the *Sharee'ah* (Islamic legislation) which must be followed, and whatever goes against them must be rejected. Any acts of worship which are not mentioned in them are therefore *Bid'ah* and it is not permissible to do them, let alone call others to do them or approve of them.

As Allaah Says (what means):

- ***“O you who believe! Obey Allaah and obey the Messenger (Muhammad), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. (And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allaah and His Messenger, if you believe in Allaah and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination”*** [Qur'aan, 4:59]
- ***“And in whatsoever you differ, the decision thereof is with Allaah (He is the ruling Judge)”*** [Qur'aan, 42:10]
- ***“Say (O Muhammad to mankind): “If you (really) love Allaah, then follow me (i.e. accept Islamic Monotheism, follow the Qur'aan and the Sunnah), Allaah will love you and forgive you your sins”*** [Qur'aan, 3:31]
- ***“But no, by your Lord, they can have no Faith, until they make you (O Muhammad) judge in all disputes between them, and find in themselves no resistance against your decisions, and accept (them) with full submission”*** [Qur'aan, 4:65]

And there are many similar *Aayaat* which clearly state that matters of dispute are to be referred to the Qur'aan and *Sunnah*, and that their ruling is to be accepted. This is the requirement of faith and this is what is best for people in this world and in the next: ***“That is better and more suitable for final determination”*** [Qur'aan, 4:59] means, in the Hereafter.

Al-Haafith Ibn Rajab, may Allaah have mercy on him, said in his book *Lataa'if al-Ma'aarif* concerning this matter – after previously discussing it:

“Laylat al-Nusf min Sha'baan (the middle of Sha'baan) was venerated by the Taabi'een (Followers) among the people of al-Shaam, such as Khaalid ibn Mi'daan, Makhool, Luqmaan ibn 'Aamir and others, who used to strive in worship on this night. The people took the idea of the virtue of this night and of venerating it from them. It was said that they heard of Israa'eeli reports (reports from Jewish sources) concerning that. Most of the scholars of the Hijaaz denounced that, including 'Ataa' and Ibn Abu Maleekah. 'Abd al-Rahmaan ibn Zayd ibn Aslam narrated that view from the Fuqahaa' (jurists) of Madeenah, and this was the view of the companions of Maalik and others. They said: this is all Bid'ah [...] No comment from Imaam Ahmad concerning Laylat al-Nusf min Sha'baan is known of [...] Concerning spending

the night of the middle of Sha'baan in prayer, there is no sound report from the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, or from his Companions..."

This is what was said by al-Haafith Ibn Rajab, may Allaah have mercy on him. He clearly states that there is no sound report from the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, or from his Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, about *Laylat al-Nusf min Sha'baan* (the middle of *Sha'baan*).

In every case where there is no sound *Shar'i* (legislative) evidence that a thing is prescribed in Islaam, it is not permissible for the Muslim to innovate things in the religion of Allaah, whether these are individual acts or communal acts, whether he does them in secret or openly, because of the general meaning of the *Hadeeth* of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*: **"Whoever does any action that is not a part of this matter of ours [Islaam], will have it rejected."** And there are other *Daleels* (evidence) which indicate that *Bid'ah* is to be denounced and which warn against it.

Imaam Abu Bakr al-Tartooshi, may Allaah have mercy on him, said, in his book *al-Hawaadith wa'l-Bida'*: *"Ibn Waddaah narrated that Zayd ibn Aslam said: 'We never met anyone among our Shaykhs and Fuqahaa' who paid any attention to Laylat al-Nusf min Sha'baan, or who paid any attention to the Hadeeth of Makhool, or who thought that this night was any more special than other nights. It was said to Ibn Abu Maleekah that Ziyaad al-Numayri was saying that the reward of Laylat al-Nusf min Sha'baan was like the reward of Laylat al-Qadr. He said: If I heard him say that and I had a stick in my hand, I would hit him. Ziyaad was a story-teller.'"*

ash-Shawkaani, may Allaah have mercy on him, said in *al-Fawaa'id al-Majmoo'ah*:

"The Hadeeth: 'O 'Ali, whoever prays one hundred Rak'ahs on Laylat al-Nusf min Sha'baan, reciting in each Rak'ah the Opening of the Book [Chapter al-Faatihah] and Qul Hurwa Allaahu Ahad ten times, Allaah will meet all his needs...' This is Mawdoo' (fabricated) [i.e., it is falsely attributed to the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam]. Its wording clearly states the reward that the person who does this will attain, and no man who has any common sense can doubt that this is fabricated. Also, the men of its Isnaad are Majhool (unknown). It was also narrated via another Isnaad, all of which is Mawdoo' (fabricated) and all of whose narrators are Majhool (unknown).

In *al-Mukhtasar* he said: *"The Hadeeth about the Salaah for the middle of Sha'baan is false, and the Hadeeth of 'Ali narrated by Ibn Hibbaan – "When it is the night of the middle of Sha'baan, spend that night in prayer and fast that day" – is Dha'eef (weak)."*

In *al-La'aali'* he said: *"One hundred Rak'ahs in the middle of Sha'baan, reciting (Chapter) al-Ikhaas ten times in each... (this is) Mawdoo' (fabricated), and all its narrators in its three Isnaads are Majhool (unknown) and Dha'eef (weak). He said: and twelve Rak'ahs, reciting al-Ikhaas thirty times in each, this is Mawdoo'; and fourteen (Rak'ahs), this is Mawdhoo'.*

A group of Fuqahaa' were deceived by this Hadeeth, such as the author of al-Ihya' and others, as were some of the Mufasssireen. The prayer of this night – the middle of Sha'baan – was described in different ways, all of which are false and fabricated."

Al-Haafith al-'Iraaqi, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *"The Hadeeth about the prayer during the night of the middle of Sha'baan is fabricated and is falsely attributed to the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam."*

Imaam an-Nawawi, may Allaah have mercy on him, said in his book *al-Majmoo'*: *"The prayer that is known as Salaat al-Raghaa'ib, which is twelve Rak'ahs between Maghrib and 'Ishaa' on the night of the first Friday in Rajab, and the prayer of Laylat al-Nusf min Sha'baan, of one hundred Rak'ahs – these two prayers are reprehensible Bid'ahs. No one should be deceived by the fact that they are mentioned in the books Qoot al-Quloob and Ihyaa' 'Uloom al-Deen, or by the Hadeeth which is mentioned in these two books. All of that is false. Nor should they be deceived by the fact that some of the Imaams were confused about this matter and wrote a few pages stating that these prayers are Mustahabb, for they were mistaken in that."*

Shaykh al-Imaam Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Rahmaan ibn Ismaa'eel al-Maqdisi, may Allaah have mercy on him, wrote a very valuable book proving that these (reports) are false, and he did a very good job. The scholars spoke at length about this matter, and if we were to quote all that we have read of what they have said about this matter, it would take far too long. Perhaps what we have already mentioned is sufficient to convince the seeker of truth.

From the *Aayahs*, narrations and scholarly opinions quoted above, it is clear to the seeker of truth that celebrating the middle of *Sha'baan* by praying on that night or in any other way, or by singling out that day for fasting, is a *Bid'ah* which is denounced by most of the scholars. It has no basis in the pure *Sharee'ah*; rather it is one of the things that was innovated in Islaam after the time of the Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them. It is sufficient for the seeker of truth, in this case and in others, to know the words of Allaah (which mean): ***"This day, I have perfected your religion for you..."*** [Qur'aan, 5:3]

and other similar *Aayaat*; and the words of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*:

"Whoever innovates something in this matter of ours [Islaam] that is not part of it, will have it rejected"

and other similar narrations.

In Saheeh Muslim it is narrated that Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, said: *"The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: 'Do not single out the night of Jumu'ah for praying Qiyaam and do not single out the day of Jumu'ah for fasting, unless it is part of the ongoing regular fast of any one of you.'"*

If it were permissible to single out any night for special acts of worship, the night of *Jumu'ah* would be the most appropriate, because the day of *Jumu'ah* (Friday) is the best day upon which the sun rises, as is stated in the *Saheeh Hadeeth* narrated from the Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*. Since the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, warned against singling out that night for praying *Qiyaam*, that indicates that it is even more prohibited to single out any other night for acts of worship, except where there is authentic evidence to indicate that a particular night is to be singled out.

Because it is prescribed to spend the nights of *Laylat al-Qadr* and the other nights of *Ramadhaan* in prayer, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, drew attention to that and urged his *Ummah* to pray *Qiyaam* during those nights. He also did that himself, as is indicated in *al-Saheehayn*, where it says that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: **“Whoever prays *Qiyaam* in Ramadaan out of faith and seeking reward, Allaah will forgive him his previous sins”** and **“Whoever spends the night of *Laylat al-Qadr* in prayer out of faith and seeking reward, Allaah will forgive him his previous sins.”**

However, if it were prescribed to single out the night of the middle of *Sha'baan*, or the night of the first Friday in *Rajab*, or the night of the *Israa'* and *Mi'raaj*, for celebration or for any special acts of worship, then the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, would have taught his *Ummah* to do that, and he would have done it himself. If anything of the sort had happened, his Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, would have transmitted it to the *Ummah*; they would not have concealed it from them, for they are the best of people and the most sincere, after the Prophets, may Allaah exalt their mention, and may Allaah be pleased with all the Companions of the Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*.

Now we know from the words of the scholars quoted above that there is no report from the Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, or from his Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, concerning the virtue of the first night of *Jumu'ah* in *Rajab*, or the night of the middle of *Sha'baan*. So we know that celebrating these occasions is an innovation that has been introduced into Islaam, and that singling out these occasions for acts of worship is a reprehensible *Bid'ah*. The same applies to the twenty-seventh night of *Rajab*, which some people believe is the night of the *Israa'* and *Mi'raaj*; it is not permissible to single this date out for acts of worship, or to celebrate this occasion, on the basis of the evidence (*Daleel*) quoted above. This is the case if the exact date (of the *Israa'* and *Mi'raaj*) is known, so how about the fact that the correct scholarly view is that its date is not known! The view that it is the night of the twenty-seventh of *Rajab* is a false view which has no basis in the *Saheeh* narrations. He indeed spoke well who said: *“The best of matters are those which follow the guided way of the salaf, and the most evil of matters are those which are newly-innovated.”*

We ask Allaah to help us and all the Muslims adhere firmly to the *Sunnah* and to beware of everything that goes against it, for He is the Most Generous, Most Kind.

May Allaah bless His slave and Messenger, our Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and all his family and Companions.

Adapted from *Majmoo' Fataawa Samaahat al-Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz*, 2/882