

THE VIRTUE OF THE NIGHT OF MID-SHABAN

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An analysis of the authenticity of the various narrations relating to the virtue of the night of Mid-Shaban from the work *Tarif bi Awham* (4/470 onwards). This extract has been adapted with additional headings for ease of reading

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PREAMBLE

The narrations regarding the virtue of the night of mid Shaban, and the sunnah of staying up during it is established from other chains of transmission which have been collated by our Shaykh, the most learned hadith expert, my Master, Abdullah bin al-Siddiq al-Ghumari in a treatise entitled *Husan al-Bayan fi Lailah al-Nisf min Shaban* which has been published.

The virtue of the night of mid Shaban has been established from the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) and is reported by means of multiple channels of transmission from Abdullah bin Amr, Muadh, Abu Hurairah, Abu Thulabah, Awf bin Malik, Abu Bakr, Abu Musa and Aishah (May Allah be pleased with all of them), each one of the narrations strengthening each other.

1 NARRATION

As for the hadith of Abdullah bin Amr, it is reported by Ahmad in *al-Musnad* (2/176) from: Abdullah bin Lahiah – Huyy(I) bin Abdullah – Abi Abd al-Rahman al-Jubuli - Abdullah bin Amr from the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) who said:

Allah looks upon His creatures on the night of mid-Sha'ban and He forgives all His servants except two: one intent on hatred, and homicide.

Hafidh al-Mundhiri said in *al-Tarhib wal-Tarhib* (3/284):

Reported by Ahmad with a weak (*layyin*) chain of narration.

Al-Haithami said in *al-Majma* (8/65):

Reported by Ahmad and it contains Ibn Lahiah who is weak (*layyin*) in hadith, and the rest of its narrators are trustworthy.

As for Shaykh Ahmad Shakir, he declared it Sahih in his editing of the Musnad (10/327) on the basis of his declaring Sahih the narrations of Ibn Lahiah. However that which al-Mundhiri and al-Haithami said is correct because Ibn Lahiah is a *mudallis*, and may have mixed up, and may have clarified hearing so the chain contains an element of weakness (*layyin*), however it is the slightest form of weakness, and its like becomes Hasan (well authenticated) by the addition of another chain of transmission similar to it, so how is it when the hadith has multiple chains of transmission?

2 NARRATION

As for the hadith of Muadh bin Jabal, it is reported by Ibn Hibban in his *Sahih* (12/481) and al-Tabarani in *al-Kabir* (20/109) and in *al-Awsat* (*al-Majma* 8/65) and Abu Nuaym in *al-Hilyah* (5/195) and others all of them from Makhul from Malik bin Yukhamir from Muadh in a *Marfu* form. Hafidh al-Haithami said in *al-Majma* (8/65):

Reported by al-Tabarani in *al-Kabir* and *al-Awsat* and its narrators are trustworthy.

Malik bin Yukhamir is a trustworthy (*thiqah*) *mukhadram* narrator who met Makhul, and there is no missing link (*inqata*) in its chain... To sum up Ibn Hibban was correct to declare it Sahih (rigorously authenticated). Thus from the previous two chains of transmission alone you will come to realise the short sightedness of the one who declares this hadith to be weak.

3 NARRATION

As for the hadith of Abu Hurairah it is reported by al-Bazzar in his *al-Musnad* (*Kashf al-Astar* 2/435-436). Al-Haithami said in *al-Majma* (8/65):

Reported by al-Bazzar and it contains Hisham bin Abd al-Rahman, and I do not know him, and the rest of its narrators are trustworthy.

4 NARRATION

As for the hadith of Abu Thalabah al-Khushani it is reported by al-Tabarani (*al-Majma* 8/65) and Ibn Abi Asim in *al-Sunnah* (1/223). Al-Haithami said (8/65):

It contains al-Ahwas bin Hakim and he is weak

The correct opinion however with regards to al-Ahwas is that of al-Darqutni that he is relied upon if he narrates from a trustworthy (*thiqah*) narrator, refer to *al-Tahdhib* (1/168), and his like are relied upon in the chapter of follow up and supporting narrations.

5 NARRATION

As for the hadith of Awf bin Malik, it is reported by al-Bazzar in his *Musnad* (*Kashf al-Astar* 2/436) from the hadith of Abdullah bin Lahiah - Abd al-Rahman bin Ziyad Ibn Naeem - Ubadah bin Nas(I) - Kathir bin Murrah - Awf bin Malik said:

The Messenger of Allah said: Allah looks at His creation in the night of mid-Sha'ban and He forgives all His creation except for a *mushrik* (idolater) or a *mushahin* (one bent on hatred).

Al-Haithami said in *Majma al-Zawaid* (6/56):

Reported by al-Bazzar and it contains Abd al-Rahman bin Ziyad bin Anam, he was declared trustworthy (*thiqah*) by Ahmad bin Saleh and he was declared weak by the majority of the Imams, and Ibn Lahiah is *layyin* (weak) and the rest of its narrators are trustworthy.

I say: the weakness is limited to Ibn Lahiah only and al-Ifriqi, a discussion of whom has preceded in the chapter of al-Adhan.

6 NARRATION

As for the hadith of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq it is reported by Ibn Khuzaimah in *al-Tawhid* (no.90) and al-Baihaqi (*al-Targhib* 3/283) and Ibn Abi Asim (no.509) Al-Bazzar said:

The people of knowledge report this hadith and rely upon it.

Al-Haithami said in *al-Majma* (8/65):

It contains Abd al-Malik bin Abd al-Malik, he was mentioned by Ibn Abi Hatim in *al-Jarh wal-Tadil* and he was not declared weak and the rest of its narrators are trustworthy.

However Abd al-Malik has a biography by al-Dhahabi in *al-Mizan* (3/658) and it contains that which indicates to him being weak.

7 NARRATION

As for the hadith of Abu Musa it is reported by Ibn Majah (1/446) and al-Lalikai (no.763) from the hadith of Ibn Lahiah – Zubair bin Muslim – Dahhak – Abd al-Rahman bin Musa in a *Marfu* form. As for Ibn Lahiah, the discussion regarding him has preceded, and his Shaykh is unknown (*majhul*) (as in *al-Taqrif* p.214) or it may be that his Shaykh is trustworthy (*thiqah*) (as in *al-Taqrif* p.279)

8 NARRATION

As for the hadith of Aishah it contains the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) staying up on that night, it is reported by Ahmad (6/238) al-Tirmidhi (743) Ibn Majah (1389) al-Lalikai (p.448) Ibn al-Jawzi in *al-Illal* (2/66) and al-Baghawi (4/124) and others from the chain of transmission from: (No. 586) Hajjaj bin Artah – Yahya bin Abi Kathir – Urwah – Aishah said:

I saw that the Prophet was not present one night so I went out to *al-Baqi'* (and found him) ... I said: "O Messenger of Allah, I thought that you might have gone to visit one of your wives." He said: "Allah Glorious and Exalted descends to the nearest heaven on the night of mid-Sha'ban and He forgives to more people than the number of hairs on the hides of the sheep of the tribes of Kalb.'

Al-Albani mentioned it in *Da'ef al-Tirmidhi* (86/199) and in *Da'ef Ibn Majah* (103,104/295) where he said it was: 'Da'ef'.

I say: the chain of narration contains a weak narrator, but the hadith is strong and established even according to al-Albani. There is a discussion surrounding al-Hajjaj, as he is a *mudallis* who did not clarify hearing.

Yahya bin Abi Kathir is a trustworthy *Hafidh*, there is however a difference over his hearing from Urwah bin al-Zubair. His hearing was affirmed by Yahya Ibn Maeen, and this is the strongest opinion because the affirmation is given precedence to the negation.

There is the issue of his being a mudallis, and his not explicitly stating having heard. Al-Hakim Abu Abdullah held the opinion that it is from the *Marasil* of Yahya bin Abi Kathir as in *Shuab al-Iman*. This narration does have another chain of transmission from Aishah with a weak chain reported by al-Baihaqi in *al-Shuab* (3835) which clearly contains (mention) of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) staying up on this night, and Allah the Exalted knows best.

9 SUMMARY

To conclude, the narrations which have preceded affirm the virtue of the night of mid Shaban due to their collective number, not least due to that one of them - which is the narration of Muadh bin Jabal - has been declared Sahih by Ibn Hibban in of itself and the words of al-Bazzar have preceded that: 'The people of knowledge report this hadith and rely upon it'.

The hadith is established even according to al-Albani as he declared it Sahih in his *al-Sahihah* (1144) and in his notes to *al-Sunnah* of Ibn Abi Asim (509,510,511,512)

As for one who adjudges the hadith to be weak then he either has no knowledge of hadith, in which case it is incumbent for him to make *taqlid* of the one who is knowledgeable of it, or he is hasty or arrogant in which case we have no discussion with him.

10 BENEFICIAL POINTS

10.1 *An Answer to Some Objections*

The night of mid Shaban is a season from the seasons of good, and the virtue of this night has been specifically established as has preceded. Despite this some people are accustomed to troubling their brothers by printing publications warning from staying up on this blessed night and declare weak anything which comes in praise of its virtues.

If the virtue of this blessed night is known then it is recommended to perform any action of obedience that comes under a general principle such as prayer, charity and the like. If it is accepted from them – *for arguments sake only* – that the hadith is weak, then the answer is to say:

First: That the non-satisfaction in the issue with a general or absolute proof and the seeking of a specific proof for every particular issue necessitates the nullification of the generalities of the *shariah* and leads to the tightening of the scope of the pure *shariah*. . . as requesting a specific proof for every issue is an innovation in the religion.

Second: As for deducing from the likes of the Words of Allah the Exalted: "Do they have partners who legislate for them the *deen* that which Allah does not give permission for." as present in the publications that some have printed related to this issue and that which is similar to it. This deduction is weak due to two reasons.

First: That the one who affirms the virtue of this blessed night deduces this from a proof of the sacred law, which is the blessed sunnah. The most that can be said is that it is weak in the sight of others, and this does not necessitate it being labelled a *bidah* or make it deserving of excessive condemnation.

Notwithstanding that acting on weak narrations in legal rulings (*Ahkam*) and virtues (*fadail*) is established from the Imams.

Second: The virtue of the night is established in the ahadith as has preceded, so they should refer to them.

10.2 *Ibn Taymiyyah's & Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali's View*

Ibn Taymiyyah was asked of the prayer of mid Shaban, he answered:

If a person prays the night of mid Shaban on his own or in a group specifically as was done by a group of the salaf then it is good (hasan).

And he said in another place, refer to *Majmu al-Fatawa..*:

As for the night of mid Shaban its virtues have been reported in narrations and reports (*athar*), it is reported from a group of the *Salaf* that they would pray during it. Thus the prayer of a person during the night on his own has a precedence from the salaf, and he has a proof in this, and the likes of this is not condemned.

Hafidh Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali said in *Lataif al-Maarif* (p.263):

The night of mid Shaban, the *tabi'in* from the people of *Shaam* exalted it and exerted themselves in worship during it. Khalid bin Madan, Luqman bin Amir and others from the *tabi'in* of *Shaam* would stay in the masjid on the night of mid Shaban, and Imam Ishaq bin Rahaway agreed with them on this. He said of their staying up for worship (*qiyam*) in the masjid where the congregational prayer was offered was that this is not an innovation (*bidah*).

End of quote with a slight change and summary. To conclude the virtue of this blessed night are established by narrations and a group of the Salaf said that it is recommended to stay up during it. Likewise the opinion that it is a *bidah* (innovation) is a reprehensible (*munkar*) opinion. . . "