

THE MERITS OF THE MONTH OF SHA[^]BAN

The month of *Sha[^]ban* is the eighth month of the lunar year in the Islamic calendar and the month immediately preceding the month of *Ramadan*. For Muslims all around the world, the month of *Sha[^]ban* is a special time in which they try to do more good deeds than usual and fast more optional fasts than they do in other months. The Prophet used to fast a lot during this month. It is the habit of the Muslims to celebrate the 15th night of the month of *Sha[^]ban* by praying, reciting *Qur'an*, praising *Allah*, and making a great deal of supplication to *Allah* during that night.

Ibn Majah narrated that the Prophet said:

إِذَا كَانَتْ لَيْلَةُ النِّصْفِ مِنْ شَعْبَانَ فَقُومُوا لَيْلَهَا وَصُومُوا نَهَارَهَا

which means: <<Spend the night preceding the 15th day of *Sha[^]ban* in acts of obedience, and fast the next day.>>

The acts of obedience meant in this *hadith* are reciting the *Qur'an*, making supplication (*du[^]a*) to *Allah*, and praying optional prayers. Even though there is a difference in opinion among the top scholars of *hadith* about the degree of confirmation of this *hadith*, acting in accordance with its orders (on that particular night, i.e., the 15th night of *Sha[^]ban*) is a good practice. This is so because the matters it orders with (i.e., reciting *Qur'an*, making supplication, praising *Allah*) are, in general, recommended matters in the Religion.

Although making supplication, in general, is a recommended matter, one needs to be cautious about what he is asking for in his supplication. It must be understood that when one supplicates to *Allah* (asks *Allah* for things) one is not asking Allah to change His Will. It is among the essentials of the belief of Muslims that *Allah's* Will is eternal and does not change. Rather, one would be asking *Allah* to change the person's situation from a difficult situation to an easier one, from a good situation to a better one, or the like. Knowing this, one needs to be cautious in his understanding of a supplication which some people recite on the night of the 15th day of *Sha[^]ban*:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كُنْتَ كَتَبْتَ كَتَبْتَنِي عِنْدَكَ فِي أُمِّ الْكِتَابِ شَقِيًّا أَوْ مَحْرُومًا أَوْ مُقْتَرًا عَلَيَّ فِي الرِّزْقِ فَامْحُ اللَّهُمَّ شَقَاوَتِي وَحِرْمَانِي وَتَقْتِرَ رِزْقِي وَارْتَبِئْ بِي مِنَ السَّعْدَاءِ

It should be noted that this particular supplication was not confirmed from the Prophet nor from [^]*Umar* or *Ibn Mas[^]ud* (as explicitly clarified by *al-Bayhaqiyy* in his book, *Al-Qadar*).

When reciting this (aforementioned) supplication, some people erroneously understand that they are asking *Allah* to change His Will. That is, they understand the words they recite to mean: "O *Allah*, if you willed for me to be miserable, poor, and deprived of the good things, change Your Will and make me happy and solvent." This is a dangerous situation. The Will of *Allah* does not change. This is among the basics of the beliefs of the Muslims. Change is among the very obvious signs that thing is a creation. *Imam Abu Hanifah* said: "Change occurs only in the creations."

Allah is not attributed with change. This matter is clarified in the Book of *Allah* and in the *hadith* of the Prophet (Some understand that the meaning of Verse #39 of *Surat ar-Ra[^]d* is: "*Allah* changes His Will". Truly, this is not the meaning of this verse as interpreted by the famous companion, *Ibn [^]Abbas*. *Al-Bayhaqiyy* narrated from *Ibn [^]Abbas* that this verse refers to the abrogations, that is, *Allah* willed for some verses of the *Qur'an* to be abrogated, and not for others to be abrogated. This interpretation of *Ibn [^]Abbas* reconfirms that the Will of *Allah* does not change.). In *Surat Qaf*, *Ayah 29*, *Allah ta[^]ala* said:

مَا يُبَدَّلُ الْقَوْلُ لَدَيَّ

which means: [My Will does not change.]

Ibn Mardawayh narrated from the Prophet that Prophet *Muhammad* asked his Lord for four (4) matters:

1. That his nation would not be destroyed by famine;
2. That his nation would not be completely destroyed by any enemy;
3. That his nation would not be completely destroyed by a torture similar to the torture which destroyed the previous nations; and
4. That the people of his nation would not fight one against the other.

The Prophet said that *Allah* granted him the first three matters but did not grant him the fourth one. So, although it was Prophet *Muhammad*, the best of the creations, who made that supplication, *Allah* did not grant him

all what he asked. This is because *Allah* willed in eternity there would be fighting between the Muslims in the different eras--and the Will of *Allah* does not change.

That *Allah's* Will does not change was more specifically clarified in *Imam Muslim's* narration of this hadith in his *Sahih*. *Imam Muslim* narrated that after the Prophet asked *Allah* for matters, *Allah* revealed to him:

إِنِّي إِذَا قَضَيْتُ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّهُ لَا يَرُدُّ

which means: <<[O *Muhammad*], if I willed for something to happen, My Will would not change.>>

In conclusion, it is rewardable and recommended to recite the *Qur'an*, pray, and make supplication during the 15th night of *Sha^ban*. However, it is blasphemy to make any supplication with the understanding that *Allah* changes His Will because of this supplication or with the understanding that it is possible that the will of *Allah* changes. Reciting the aforementioned supplication with the understanding that one is asking *Allah* to change the bad situation to become a better one (and not to change what *Allah* eternally Willed) is not sinful.

Beneficial Information

It is a good matter to recite the following supplication on the 15th night of *Sha^ban*:

اللَّهُمَّ يَا اللَّهُ يَا حَيُّ يَا قَيُّوْمُ يَا غَفُوْرُ يَا تَوَّابُ يَا هَادِي يَا فَتَّاحُ يَا رَزَّاقُ يَا وَهَّابُ
يَا كَرِيْمُ يَا اِرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِيْنَ يَا ذَا الْمَنِّ وَالْإِنْعَامِ أَسْأَلُكَ بِحَقِّ أَسْمَائِكَ الْحُسْنَى أَنْ
تُصَلِّيَ وَتُسَلِّمَ عَلَيَّ سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَأَنْ تُجْعَلَنَا مُوْفِقِيْنَ لِلْخَيْرِ وَالْأَذْكَارِ مُسْتَغْنِيْنَ
بِفَضْلِكَ عَمَّنْ سِوَاكَ ، وَأَنْ تُرَزِّقَنَا كَمَالَ الْإِيْمَانِ وَقُوَّةَ الْيَقِيْنِ ، وَأَنْ تُحْمِسِرَتَنَا مَعَ
الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالشَّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِيْنَ بِجَاهِ سَيِّدِ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ وَمُحِبِّ رِبِّ الْعَالَمِيْنَ ، وَالْحَمْدُ
لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِيْنَ وَصَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيَّ سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَسَلَّمَ

which means: <<O *Allah*, You are the Alive, the *Qayyum*, the Forgiver of sins, the One Who accepts the repentance, the One Who creates the guidance, the One Who endows the endowments on the people and sustains them, the Generous and Most Merciful. O *Allah*, We ask You by the virtue of Your Good Names to raise the rank of our Prophet *Muhammad*, to guide us to mention You a lot, to make us rely deeply on You, and to make us satisfied with what You give us without leaning towards acquiring worldly matters from other than You, and to do the good deeds. We ask You to give us a perfect belief and a strong certitude, and to gather us on the Day of Judgment with the prophets, the martyrs, and the righteous Muslims. We ask You for all of that by the virtue of our Master, *Muhammad*, the Master of the Messengers and the Special beloved person to His Lord. Praise be to *Allah*, the Owner of the humans and the jinns. May *Allah* raise the rank of our Prophet, *Muhammad*, and protect his nation from that which he fears for them. *Amin*.

And *Allah* knows best.