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The second question of Fatwa no. 884

Q 2: Some scholars say that many Hadiths were narrated about the merit of spending the night of mid-Sha'ban in Salah (Prayer) and its day in Sawm (Fasting). Are these Hadiths Sahih (authentic) or not? If there are Sahih Hadiths, please explain them to us in detail. If not, please advise, may Allah reward you!

A: Many Sahih Hadiths were narrated about the merit of Sawm in Sha'ban, but without making mention of a specific day. For example, there is a Hadith in the Two Sahih (authentic) Books of Hadith (i.e. Al-Bukhari and Muslim) which states that `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: *«I did not see the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) completing the fast of a month, but that of Ramadan. I did not see him fasting more in any other month than in Sha'ban. He used to fast the whole month of Sha'ban except for few days.»* In the Hadith narrated by Usamah ibn Zayd, he said to the Prophet (peace be upon him): *«I have not seen you fast in a month as much as you fast in Sha'ban.»* He (peace be upon him) said, *«This is a month between Rajab and Ramadan which people overlook. It is a month in which deeds are raised to the Lord of the Worlds, and I love that my deeds be raised while I am fasting.»* (Narrated by Imam Ahmad and Al-Nasa'y)

There is no Sahih Hadith which states that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to observe Sawm on a certain day, or days in Sha'ban. There are only some Da'if (weak) Hadiths about spending the night of mid-Sha'ban in Salah and the day in Sawm, including the one narrated by Ibn Majah in his Sunan (Hadith compilations classified by jurisprudential themes) in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: *«When it is the night of mid-Sha'ban, you should spend its night in Salah and its day in Sawm, for Allah (may He be Exalted) descends on it at sunset to the nearest heaven and says,*

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'Is there anyone who seeks forgiveness that I may forgive them? Is there anyone who asks for sustenance that I may provide for them? Is there any afflicted person that I may relieve them?' and so on and on, until the break of dawn.» Ibn Hibban ranked some Hadiths narrated in regard to the merit of spending the night of mid-Sha'ban in Salah as Sahih, including the one reported in his Sahih, from `Aishah who said: *«I missed the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) during one night, so I went out to search for him, and I found him in Al-Baqi'. He (peace be upon him) said (to her), 'Did you fear being wronged by Allah and His Messenger?' She said, 'O Messenger of Allah! I thought that you had gone to one of your wives.' He (peace be upon him) said, 'Verily, Allah (may He be Glorified and Exalted) descends on the night of mid-Sha'ban to the nearest heaven, and He forgives a number of people which exceeds the number of the sheep owned by Kalb (a tribe known for their sheep).»*

Al-Bukhari and others ranked this Hadith as Da'if (weak); most scholars say that the Hadiths narrated about the merit of the night of the middle of Sha'ban and Sawm on its day are Da'if. Ibn Hibban is known among the scholars of Hadith for not being strict in ranking Hadiths as Sahih.

Overall, according to the expert scholars who verify Hadith, there is no Hadith ranked as Sahih among those narrated about the merits of spending the night of the middle of Sha'ban in Salah and the day in Sawm. Thus, they negated the merits of spending the night in Salah and the day in Sawm,

and considered this a Bid'ah (innovation in religion). But a group of worshippers glorified this night, relying on the Da'if Hadiths narrated about it, and people followed them as they thought highly of them. Some of them, out of excessive glorification paid to the night of mid-Sha'ban, even reached to the extent of saying that it is the blessed night on which the Qur'an was sent down, and every matter of ordainment is decreed.

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They considered it the Tafsir (explanation/exegesis of the meanings) of Allah's Statement: ﴿We sent it (this Qur'ân) down on a blessed night [(i.e. night of Al-Qadr, Sûrah No. 97) in the month of Ramadân - the 9th month of the Islâmic calendar]. Verily, We are ever warning [mankind that Our Torment will reach those who disbelieve in Our Oneness of Lordship and in Our Oneness of worship].﴾ (Therein (that night) is decreed every matter of ordainments.﴾ This is blatant error, and a distortion of the meaning of the Qur'an. What is meant by the blessed night in the Ayah is Laylat-ul-Qadr (the Night of Decree), as Allah states: ﴿Verily, We have sent it (this Qur'ân) down in the night of Al-Qadr (Decree).﴾ which is in Ramadan, based on the Hadiths reported in this regard, and because Allah says: ﴿The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur'ân, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong).﴾

May Allah grant us success! May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family and Companions!

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Source: Fatwas of the Permanent Committee