

وَأَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الضُّرُّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّحِيمِينَ ط

" أُسَامَةُ بْنُ زَيْدٍ قَالَ قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَمْ أَرَكَ تَصُومُ شَهْرًا مِنَ الشُّهُورِ مَا تَصُومُ مِنْ شَعْبَانَ . قَالَ " ذَلِكَ شَهْرٌ يَغْفُلُ النَّاسُ عَنْهُ بَيْنَ رَجَبٍ وَرَمَضَانَ وَهُوَ شَهْرٌ تُرْفَعُ فِيهِ الْأَعْمَالُ إِلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ فَأُحِبُّ أَنْ يُرْفَعَ عَمَلِي وَأَنَا صَائِمٌ

My dear respected brothers and sisters Assalāmu ‘Alaykum Wa Raḥmatullāhi Wa Barakātuhu. I begin my praising Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى and sending peace and salutations on our beloved Messenger Muḥammad صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

This is now the second Jum‘ah where we find ourselves in the vicinity of our homes rather than in the blessed walls of the Masājid. I spoke last week about the various benefits we have seen during this time, families coming together, more appreciation of one another. More appreciation of simple things that we took for granted but cannot do anymore, like visiting families, visiting friends, going for walks, shopping, coming to the Masjid, and so much more.

We just have to remain patient and Inshā’Allāh, this too will pass. We have to ensure that we do not keep ourselves occupied with an influx on information. Now, more than anytime ever, people are spending more time reading the news, reading social media, sending on messages which are not verified. WhatsApp groups are full of messages and videos, one after the other. Try and mute them if you can and spend your precious time on beneficial acts.

We need to divert our attention and focus from the news and negativity to worthwhile beneficial knowledge and positivity. So for the next 20 minutes or so we shall Inshā’Allāh learn about something which will benefit us greatly.

It is a great bounty of Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى that he gives us various occasions throughout the year where the believers can earn great reward. We have various opportunities where if we carry out worship on these occasions, it can be greatly beneficial. We know about the month of Ramaḍān, which is going to arrive soon. Each obligatory action is rewarded 70 times and each optional act gets the reward of an obligatory. We also know about how blessed the nights are, especially the night of Qadr which is better than a thousand months.

We are currently in the month of Sha‘bān the month preceding Ramaḍān. Sha‘bān come from the word Tasha‘ub means to move in different directions, to part company. In the days of ignorance, in this month, the tribes would separate and go here and there to fight. The reason for this is the

month which precedes Sha‘bān is Rajab which was considered as a sacred month in which fighting was prohibited.

The month of Sha‘bān is also a very blessed month. In this month, there is also an occasion where we can earn a great amount of reward. The 15<sup>th</sup> Night of this month is called laylatul Barā‘ah. This is the night between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> day. We have to remember in Islām, our day starts at Maghrib time, so the 15<sup>th</sup> night will begin after the 14<sup>th</sup> day.

This year it will occur next Tuesday Night. Now there are many misconceptions about this night which we will Inshā‘Allah clear up today. Many of our elders including Mufti Taqi Uthmani DB and our Shaykh Maulana Fazlur Rahman Azami DB have written about this night in great detail. I will Inshā‘Allāh take information from these sources to try and clear up any misconceptions.

Firstly what does the word Barā‘ah mean? It means that the judgment to be saved from Jahannam, the Hell Fire is passed on this night. Some people mistakenly call it Laylatul Bārāt. In the Indian subcontinent, this actually means the night of the wedding.

Mufti Sa‘īd Aḥmad Palanpuri DB in his famous commentary of Jami‘ Tirmidhī, Tuḥfatul Alma‘ī mentions that words have great affect. Because this night became known as the night of Bārāt, people started all sorts of customs, like lighting fireworks and candles etc. on this night.

We have to remember before we carry out any actions, we have to look for its authenticity and ensure we are not carrying out any innovative actions.

So regarding this night, let us look at our sources. The original source of our knowledge is the Qur’ān, there is no mention of this night in the Quran. Some Mufassirs, scholars in the commentary of the Qur’ān have attributed verses in Sūrah Dhukhān, ‘Inna Anzalnāhu fī Laylatin Mubārakatin’, to this night, but this verse actually refers to the night of Qadr, the night of power.

After the Qur’ān, we then look at the Ḥadīth, the narrations. Maulana Fazlur Rahman DB writes that the narrations that we find with regards to this night are in fact quite weak. However, the consensus of the scholars is that due to the sheer amount of narrations which are available on this subject, the virtue of this night will be considered authentic. There are also many narration’s which have been fabricated and are baseless and are also unfortunately followed by many people. We have to be careful of verifying the source of whatever actions we do on this night.

Maulana Fazlur Rahman DB has collated many of these Aḥādīth in his booklet which is available on the internet. Due to the fact of the sheer amount of Ḥadīth, one should not completely disregard the merits of the night altogether.

In Tuḥfatul Alma‘ī, Mufti Sa‘īd DB mentions from the Ḥadīth we can deduce that there are only 3 acts which are proven for a person can do on this night

1. A person should ask for forgiveness for themselves and forgiveness for the deceased. It is not necessary to visit the graveyard on this night.
2. A person should perform ‘Ibādah, worship, alone on this night, without fixing any number for Nafl (optional) Rak‘āṭ. The worship should not be carried out together. There is no basis to gather in one place and perform collective prayers on this night.
3. For a person who keeps the fast on the following day, the fast will be considered as optional Nafl, not sunnah according to the Fuqahā, the Jurists.

Maulana Fazlur Rahman further mentions:

“The virtue of this night that is established from these Aḥādīth is that from the very beginning of the night Allāh **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** turns with special mercy and attention towards the creation and forgives those who repent and seek forgiveness.

Every Muslim should therefore value this night. Turn towards Allāh **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** with sincere regret and shame over sins committed and make a promise never to return to sin again and seek forgiveness from Allāh. Seek forgiveness for oneself and the rest of the Muslims, living and deceased. Have the firm hope and resolution in the heart that Allah will surely show mercy and forgiveness.”

So we can see that the virtue of this night starts from the very beginning, on normal nights the last third portion is the most blessed, but on this night, it is the whole night.

From the Ḥadīth we can also understand that there will be some people who will be deprived of Allāh **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** forgiveness on this night. And these people are as follows.

- 1) Idolaters; - the people who worship idols
- 2) Those who harbour enmity against others; those people who have grudges against others.
- 3) Consumers of alcohol;
- 4) Those that disobey their parents;
- 5) Those who wear their trousers, Kurtas (*Shirt, upper garment etc.*) , Lungis (*lower garment etc.*) etc. below their ankles;
- 6) and those who commit adultery and murder;

We have to ask ourselves, are we included in any of the above groups, do we consume alcohol, do we commit adultery, do we disobey our parents? If we are in the any of these groups, then the first thing we must do is correct this by stopping that deed and asking for forgiveness.

Now going back to the 3 actions we mentioned earlier, let's take these 3 things separately, firstly asking for forgiveness for one's self and for the deceased. We know that on this night Allāh *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى* turns with special mercy and attention towards his creation and forgives those people who seek repentance. So we must ask for forgiveness from all of our sins, big and small and make a resolution that we will not commit them again.

### Asking for forgiveness

A quick reminder of how to ask for forgiveness. The conditions for repentance are as follows:

1. Whichever sins we are asking forgiveness from, we must stop them right away,
2. We must supplicate to Allāh *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى* to forgive us
3. We must have a firm intention that we will not do the sin again.
4. If we are committing the sin with a particular person or a group of people or we are committing the sin in a particular place, then we must stop visiting the people or places.

We cannot ask for forgiveness with the intention that we will commit the sin again and then keep asking for forgiveness, this will not be true repentance.

We must also supplicate for forgiveness for our relatives and friends who have passed away as they are not in a position to do anything at all which will benefit them. And while we are asking for forgiveness, have firm hope in our hearts that Allāh *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى* is the most forgiving most merciful so he will Inshā'Allāh forgive them and us.

### Visiting Graveyards on this Night

Now what about visiting the graveyard on this night? We have mentioned already that there are no authentic Ḥadīth with regards to Rasūlullāh *صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ* visiting the graveyard on this night. We do however know that it was a habit of Rasūlullāh *صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ* that he would frequently visit the graveyard of Baqī, in the daytime and the nighttime. There is a Hadith in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim narrated by 'Ā'ishah *رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا*.

She says "Rasulullah (Sallaho Alaihe Wassallam) once entered my room when it was my turn for him to spend the night with. He placed his sheet aside, removed his sandals and kept them at his feet. He spread the edge of his lungi (*lower garment*) over the bedding and lay down.

He lay still until he thought I had fallen asleep. He then took his sheet slowly, wore his shoes and gently opened the door, and (as he left), closed the door very gently. I also dressed, donned my veil and left behind him.

He went to Baqī<sup>c</sup> where he remained standing for a long time. He thereafter raised and dropped his hands thrice and returned. I also returned. He was walking fast, and I did the same in order to not to be detected.

I hastened my pace in conformance to his and thus reached home before him. Just as I lay down, he entered the room. He asked: O 'Ā'ishah, why are you breathing so heavily? I replied that there was nothing to it. He said: Tell me otherwise Allāh will inform me. I replied: May my parents be sacrificed for thee and then related the entire incident to him.

He asked: Are you the same person I saw in the distance? I replied in the affirmative. He gave me a slight push with his fist in my chest, the effect of which I felt, and he asked once again: Did you think that Allāh and His Rasūl ﷺ would oppress you? I replied: No matter how much people try to hide something from you, then too Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى informs you.

Rasūlullāh ﷺ then said to me Jibrīl عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام came to me. He secretly called me. I also secretly answered him. I thought that you had fallen asleep and did not desire to awaken you.

Besides, I feared that you would become scared. Jibrīl عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام said to me: Your Lord commands you to visit the inmates of Baqī<sup>c</sup> and make Du'ā for their forgiveness. 'Ā'ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا questioned Rasūlullāh ﷺ as to what he recited there. He replied: Say the following supplication:

السَّلَامُ عَلَى أَهْلِ الدِّيَارِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمِينَ وَيَرْحَمُ اللَّهُ الْمُسْتَقْدِمِينَ مِنَّا وَالْمُسْتَأْخِرِينَ وَإِنَّا إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ بِكُمْ لَلْآحِقُونَ

**Translation:** Peace be upon the believing (Mu'min) Inhabitants of the home and may Allāh shower mercy upon the deceased amongst us and those whose death still awaits them. And verily, if Allāh wills, we will soon join you.

Now the above Ḥadīth makes no mention of the fact that it was night of the 15<sup>th</sup> of Sha<sup>c</sup>bān when Rasūlullāh ﷺ went to Baqī<sup>c</sup>. There are other weaker narrations which mention that it was the night of the 15<sup>th</sup> but again even if Rasūlullāh ﷺ went, he did not command other people to do so, it was a coincidence that 'Ā'ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا just happened to follow and see him that night.

So we should visit the graveyard whenever we have the opportunity. The problem is nowadays, we restrict our visiting to graveyards to just ʿĪd, we go twice a year and that's it. We should not restrict ourselves to visiting the graveyards only on certain days but go as much as we can. When we go to the graveyards, we will remember death, that this will be our next abode after this life, it will help us by making us think and refocus our lives. And we can also pray for our deceased as well while we are there. Read the supplication when we enter, read Sūrāh Yāsin, read Qur'ān and supplicate for all of them.

### ʿIbādah – Worship

Now the second thing was to read a prescribed amount of Ṣalāh on this night, a set amount of Nafl – optional prayers. Again there is nothing from the Aḥādīth which tells us that a certain amount of units are to be read. The one Ḥadīth which does mention a certain amount should be read has been classified by some of the Jurists as being mawḍū – fabricated.

### Fasting

The third thing was fasting on the day after, so on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Shaʿbān. When we keep a fast, we have to know what type of fast it is. We know it cannot be a compulsory fast as they are in Ramadan. If we were to say it was a Sunnah fast then we would be attributing something to Rasūlullāh ﷺ which is not proven by authentic Ḥadīth and this is very dangerous. We can regard this fast as optional and Mustahab - desirable.

We do know that Rasūlullāh ﷺ used to fast excessively in the Month of Shaʿbān, there is a Ḥadīth in Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhari with ʿĀ'ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا describing the fast of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. She says that aside from the month of Ramaḍān, he never used to fast for the entire month. However, of the remaining eleven months, he would fast in Shaʿbān the most.

So to summarize, this night is very blessed and has been proven by the sheer amount of Ḥadīth which have been narrated about it. We should spend the night in duʿā - supplication and prayer on an individual basis not on a collective basis. We must refrain from performing any actions which are against the teachings of Islām and have not been proven. The following day, if you wish to fast then you may do so and this will be an optional, nafl and desirable Mustahab fast.

May Allāh سُبْحَانَكَ وَتَعَالَى give us all the ability to practise Islām properly and protect us from all form of Bidʿah, innovation in our religion. May he shower our Teachers with blessings, who have gone to great lengths to ensure that we practise our religion in a proper and correct manner.

I just wanted to conclude on one point and that is Tawakkul, which means reliance and trust in Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى. These last few weeks have been very challenging for many of us, and the challenge has not yet been overcome. However Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى has blessed us with the one tool which will help us get through this and this is our faith.

Alḥamdulillāh we believe everything happens with the will of Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى. This helps us come to terms with loss, with tragedy, with adversity and difficulty. And when we come out on the other side, Inshā'Allāh our connection with Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى will have become strengthened. We are seeing how the creation is helpless in front of the command of Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى. No matter how much money we have, how much technological advancement we have reached, the world has come to its knees in face of something we cannot even see. And even this is a creation of Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى.

So for us, let us start by correcting ourselves. Let us start fulfilling all of our obligations, let us pray 5 times a day, let us discharge our Zakāt properly, let us make sure this Ramaḍān is the best Ramaḍān we have had so far and if Allāh has decided we will be able to go for Ḥajj, then let us prepare for that as well. Let us remove all the bad habits and traits we have and replace them with good habits and traits. Let us use this time productively, wisely, let us not waste it. Time is really of the essence; each breath is a blessing from Allāh.

May Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى make us return to normality, may he cure those who are ill, may he grant patience to the families of those who have lost loved and may he makes the graves of those who have passed away as a result of this virus, graves of Jannah, for surely, they are in a better place than us.