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Shawwāl: The Virtues and Merits of fasting in Shawwāl

Shawwāl is the first of the three Months of Ḥajj, followed by Dhūl Qa'dah and the first ten days of Dhūl Ḥijjah. While the main rituals occur in Dhūl Ḥijjah, acts like Ṭawāf al-Qudūm and Sa'ī can only be performed from Shawwāl onwards. An 'Umrah before Shawwāl cannot count toward Ḥajj Tamattu', but one during Shawwāl can. Entering Ihram for Ḥajj before Shawwāl is valid but disliked. Thus, Shawwāl marks the beginning of the Ḥajj season.

Another significant virtue of the month of Shawwāl is the reward of fasting for six days. After observing the fasts of Ramaḍān, whoever fasts for six days in this month receives the reward of fasting for the entire year. It is narrated from Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī (RA) that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said:

"مَنْ صَامَ رَمَضَانَ ثُمَّ أَتْبَعَهُ بِسِتٍّ مِنْ شَوَّالٍ، كَانَ كَصَوْمِ الدَّهْرِ"

"Whoever observed the fast of Ramaḍān and then followed it with six fasts of Shawwāl, it would be as if he fasted perpetually".

(Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 1164a)

This Ḥadīth highlights the immense Thawāb (reward) of fasting six days in Shawwāl. Scholars explain that, based on the established principles of Sharī'ah, every good deed is multiplied by ten. Thus, the Thawāb of fasting 30 days in Ramaḍān is equivalent to fasting for 300 days. When six additional fasts are observed, they yield the Thawāb of 60 more days, making a total of 360 days, which aligns with the number of days in the Islamic lunar year.

Given this great reward, Muslims should strive to fast these six days and earn such an enormous reward from Allāh ﷻ. Some scholars state that it is Mustahabb to observe these six fasts consecutively, while others consider it permissible to fast them on separate days. However, it is essential to note that these fasts must begin from the 2nd of Shawwāl onwards, as fasting on the day of 'Eid (1st of Shawwāl) is Ḥarām.

Note: It is better to make up missed fasts of Ramaḍān before fasting the six days of Shawwāl, as Qaḍā' is Farḍ and takes precedence over Mustahabb acts. While it is ideal to complete Qaḍā' first, the Shawwāl fasts remain valid if observed beforehand. Furthermore, the Qaḍā' fasts and the six fasts of Shawwāl should be kept separately.

Reference: 1) Mufti Muhammad Taqī Usmani, Islamic Months (Pages 119-128) 2) Mufti Abdul Wahab Hassan, Issues and Rulings Regarding Islamic Months (Pages 190-201)

100 ways to enter Jannah (46-50)

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Raising 2 or 3 daughters and being merciful towards them

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Reference: 100 Ways to Enter Jannah, Dr. Shabbir Ahmed

The Sunrise of Prophethood on Mount Faran

At the age of forty, the Prophet ﷺ was in the Cave of Ḥirā, engaged in solitude as was his custom, when suddenly an angel appeared before him. The angel greeted him with Salām and commanded: "Read!" The Prophet ﷺ, in response, said: "I am unable to read". The Prophet ﷺ narrates that the angel then embraced him so forcefully that he felt immense pressure. This occurred three times before the angel revealed the first verses of the Qur'ān:

أَفْرَأْ بِأَسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ أَفْرَأْ أَوَرَبُّكَ الْآكْزَمُ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

"Read in the name of your Lord Who created. He created man from a clot. Read! And your Lord is Most Generous, Who taught by the pen, taught man what he knew not."

(Sūrah al-'Alaq: 1-5)

Shaken by the overwhelming experience, the Prophet ﷺ returned home trembling and asked his wife, Khadijah (RA), to cover him. Once he calmed down, he narrated the entire incident to her and expressed his fear. In response, Khadijah (RA) reassured him:

"By Allāh! He will never disgrace you. You uphold family ties, always speak the truth, help the needy, assist the poor, and support every good cause. How can a man of such character be forsaken?"

She further expressed her belief that this was a great sign from Allāh and that he was chosen as a messenger for this Ummah.

Khadijah (RA) then took the Prophet ﷺ to her cousin, Waraqah ibn Nawfal, a scholar of the earlier scriptures. Upon hearing the account, Waraqah immediately recognised the angel as the same one who came to Mūsā (AS). He warned the Prophet ﷺ that his people would oppose him and drive him out, as was the fate of previous prophets. The Prophet ﷺ, surprised, asked: "Will they really expel me?" Waraqah confirmed that every prophet who brought a divine message faced hostility but assured that if he lived to see that time, he would support him wholeheartedly. Soon after, Waraqah passed away.

The Prophet ﷺ, still grappling with the magnitude of the revelation, would often reflect on his experience. On such occasions, Jibrīl (AS) would appear and reassure him:

"O Muḥammad! You are indeed the true prophet of Allāh".

To further affirm the nature of the angelic visitations, Khadijah (RA) devised a test. When Jibrīl (AS) appeared again, she asked the Prophet ﷺ to place his head in her lap and then uncovered her hair. When she asked if he could still see Jibrīl, he replied, "No". She then remarked, "Glad tidings unto you! This is an angel, not Shayṭān".

Thus, the Prophet ﷺ embraced his role as the Messenger of Allāh with conviction, marking the beginning of divine revelation and his mission to guide humanity.

Reference: Muḥammad Idrīs Kāndhlawi, Seeratul Muṣṭafā (Pages 41-44)



Angels Lower Wings

« مَا مِنْ خَارِجٍ خَرَجَ مِنْ بَيْتِهِ فِي طَلَبِ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا وَضَعَتْ لَهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَجْنِحَتَهَا رِضًا بِمَا يَصْنَعُ »

"No one leaves their house in search of knowledge but that angels will lower their wings in approval of what he is doing." (Sunan Ibn Mājah:226)

A Heart of Gold

The Ṣaḥābī of the Prophet ﷺ, Sayyidunā Qays ibn Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah (RA), once fell ill. While recovering, he noticed that none of his friends had come to visit him. Upon inquiring, he learned that they were hesitant to do so because they owed him money and were either embarrassed or afraid that he would ask them to repay their debts.

On hearing this, Sayyidunā Qays ibn Sa'd (RA) immediately said: "May Allāh disgrace the wealth that prevents my brothers from visiting me!" He then instructed someone to go out and announce that he had absolved all his debtors of the amounts they owed him.

After this announcement was made, so many people came to visit him that by nightfall, his doorstep collapsed under the weight of those climbing to reach his door.

Lessons:

- A Muslim should never allow wealth to damage relationships with family or fellow Muslims, as often happens in matters such as inheritance disputes or the dissolution of business partnerships. Money can always be recovered, but a heart wounded by harsh words or insensitive behavior rarely heals completely.
- The debt owed to Sayyidunā Qays ibn Sa'd (raḍiya Allāhu 'anhumā) was a small, temporary investment. By forgiving it, he effectively transferred it to an eternal investment, securing returns far greater than anything material wealth could offer.
- While he sacrificed money, he purchased immense and immeasurable Barakah (blessings). Barakah is not always visible to the eye; it manifests in countless ways and is the foundation of all goodness in this world.

Reference: Rays of Radiance (pages: 42-43)

Assuming the Moon's Age Based on Its Size

It is extremely unfortunate that even educated people today, when speaking without knowledge, say things like: "Look how fat and big the moon is - it must be the second or third day". They possess neither knowledge of Ḥadīth nor of science, yet they themselves are misguided and are misguiding others.

There are more than forty Aḥādīth in the collections of Ḥadīth stating: *"Observe fast on sighting it (the new moon) and break (fast) on sighting it (the new moon), but if the sky is cloudy for you, then complete the number (of thirty)"* (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 1081b). We should adhere to the clear instruction of the Prophet of Allāh ﷺ regarding the sighting of the moon. In any case, the entire evening of the 29th should be carefully observed. In Australia, when the moon is not seen, the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ is followed by completing the lunar month as thirty days.

Keep in mind that the moon appears thicker and larger on the 30th of the month. The reason for this is that the moon's age increases by approximately 24 hours each day. For instance, after the 29th of a lunar month has passed, the new moon does appear on the horizon immediately after sunset. However, if it is around four to five degrees, its age is eighteen hours, and it remains visible on the horizon for only fifteen to twenty minutes, then although the moon is technically present, there is no possibility of sighting it. In such a case, the lunar month will be completed as thirty days.

By the next evening, the age of that same moon will be forty-two hours, its altitude on the horizon will reach twelve degrees or more, and it will remain visible for a longer period - such as one hour - and it will appear larger. Nevertheless, it will still most certainly be the moon of the first night.

In this matter, the foundation in Ḥadīth and Islamic law is that the ruling of the new month is based on Ru'yah (actual sighting). It is not based on whether the moon appears small or large, or on its Qurb or Bu'd (apparent distance). The core principle is simply visibility.

Our Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ foretold this as Shu'bah narrates that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: *"From among the signs of the Hour is that the moon will appear large". At times, the new moon will be seen during the night, and people will say: "It is the moon of the second night".* (Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah: 37553) Imām Ṭabarānī reports a similar narration in al-Mu'jam al-Awsaṭ that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said:

"From among the signs of the Hour is the swelling of the crescents, and that the new moon will be seen at night and it will be said: it is for two nights". (Al-Ṭabarānī, al-Mu'jam al-Awsaṭ: 9/147)

That is, one of the signs of Qiyāmah is that the new moon will appear full and clear, and due to its clarity and obviousness without any effort or search, it will be sighted instantly and people will say, "This moon is two nights old!" Whereas in reality, it is the moon of the very night it was sighted.

Imām Ṭabarānī also narrates in al-Mu'jam al- Kabīr a Ṣaḥīḥ (authentic) Ḥadīth:

"From among the signs of the Hour is the swelling of the crescent moons, and that the new moon will be seen at night and people will say: it is for two nights". (al-Ṭabarānī in al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr: 10/198)

This is also a sign of the approaching Hour-the new moon will appear full and large, and once again people will claim that it belongs to the previous night (Just as some ignorant people said on this 'Eīd.)

Imām Muslim, in his Ṣaḥīḥ, dedicated a chapter specifically to this issue of the moon appearing fat or thin. He clarified that the crescent's size carries no legal weight when determining the start of a month.

The title of the chapter is:

بَابُ بَيَانِ أَنَّهُ لَا عِتْبَارَ بِكِبَرِ الْهِلَالِ وَصِغَرِهِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى أَمَدَهُ لِلرُّؤْيَا فَإِنْ عُمِّرَ فَلْيُكْمَلْ ثَلَاثُونَ

Chapter: "Clarifying that it does not matter whether the crescent is large or small, for Allāh, the Most High, causes it to appear for sighting, and if it is obscured, then complete thirty days".

In this chapter, he narrates that Abū al-Bakhtarī reported:

"We saw the new moon of Ramaḍān while we were at Dhāt 'Irq. We sent a man to Ibn 'Abbās (RA) to ask whether the sighting of a small crescent had any defect in it. Ibn 'Abbās replied that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: Verily, Allāh deferred its sighting, and if it is hidden from you, then complete it as thirty (days)". (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 1088)

A similar narration appears in Mishkāṭ al-Maṣābīḥ, also transmitted by Imām Muslim. Abū al-Bakhtarī said:

"We went out to perform 'umrah, and when we camped in the valley of Nakhla, we tried to sight the new moon. Some people said it was three nights old, while others said it was two nights old. We later met Ibn 'Abbās (RA) and told him what had happened. He asked which night we had seen it. When we told him, he said: 'The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ deferred it until it is seen, so the count begins from the night it was seen'. (Mishkāṭ al-Maṣābīḥ 1981)

Another point of confusion that arose within the community this year concerned the boundaries of Australia. Moonsighting Australia accepts reports from all parts of the country, including Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, as has been done in the past. Their geographical distance is not relevant, as they are officially part of Australia. While sightings from these remote areas aren't always received due to the lack of available people who can report, this time specific arrangements were made to ensure that reliable individuals were present to report any sightings.

To conclude, in matters of moonsighting, we must adhere strictly to the clear guidance of the Prophet ﷺ: the start and end of the lunar month are based solely on actual sighting (ru'yah), not the moon's size, shape, or apparent age. Mistaken assumptions- such as judging the date by how "big" the moon looks-contradict both scientific understanding and the teachings of our Dīn.

- Dr. Shabbir Ahmed

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