

Authenticity: Virtue of the 15th Night of Sha’ban

Muaz Billoo

The virtue of the 15th night of Sha’ban is authentically established from the Hadith corpus. Muslims are encouraged to engage in extra, individual worship (such as salah, tilawah, dhikr, dua) on this night, although no specific act of worship is authentically recorded. The following article is meant to demonstrate some of the authentic reports on the topic, so that those who wish to engage in worship in this night can do so with peace of mind. This article is also meant to serve as a quick reference for those unaware of the authentic Hadiths. I have benefitted tremendously from Maulana Tahmidul Maula’s *al-I’tibar*, an approximately 130-page booklet on the topic. This article can be considered a summary of select portions of his work. Hereunder we present some of these narrations:

1. Mu’adh ibn Jabal رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, “**Allah showers His mercy upon His creation in the middle night (i.e. 15th night) of Sha’ban. He forgives everyone except for the polytheist and the one who carries enmity.**”

Sources: This Hadith was narrated by Imam Ibn Hibban (d. 354) رحمته الله in his *Sahih* (5665), as well as Imam al-Tabarani (d. 360) رحمته الله in his *Mu’jam Awsat* (7/36) and *Mu’jam Kabir* (20/108), Imam al-Baihaqi (d. 458) رحمته الله in his *Shu’ab al-Iman* (3552), and others.

Authenticity:

Hafiz Nur al-Din al-Haithami (d. 807) رحمته الله says in *Majma’ al-Zawaid* (8/126), “Narrated by al-Tabarani in *al-Kabir* and *al-Awsat*, and the narrators of both are reliable.”

Imam al-Baihaqi رحمته الله says in *Shu’ab al-Iman* (3/382) after narrating the aforementioned Hadith, “We have narrated this from multiple avenues, and in that there is proof that the Hadith has a basis...”

This Hadith was declared *Hasan* by the likes of Hafiz al-‘Iraqi رحمته الله (d. 806) and Imam al-Zarqani رحمته الله (d. 1122), as mentioned in *Sharh al-Zarqani ‘ala al-Mawahib* (10/561). Hafiz al-‘Iraq’s declaration of *Hasan* was also quoted by Shaikh

Muhammad Awwamah in his annotation on *Musannaf ibn Abi Shaibah* (30479) with reference to the aforementioned *Sharh al-Mawahib*.

Shaikh Shu'aib al-Arnaut says declares the Hadith *Sahih bi Shawahidihi* (rigorously authenticated when combined with its supporting evidences) in his annotations on *Sahih ibn Hibban* (5665).

Mufti Abdul Malik (may Allah preserve him) writes in the *al-Kawthar* magazine (September 2005), "Narrated by Ibn Hibban and others, and the narrators are reliable. Its chain of transmission is fully connected per the stance of Imam Muslim, which is the stand of the majority of scholars..."

The Hadith was declared *Hasan* by Dr. Abdul Ilah al-'Arfaj in his book, *Lailah al-Nisf Min Sha'ban*.

Maulana Tahmidul Maula says, "Its chain is *sahih*" in *al-I'tibar* pg. 38.

2. Abu Bakr al-Siddiq رضي الله عنه narrates that the messenger of Allah ﷺ said, **"When it is the middle night (i.e. 15th) of Sha'ban, Allah descends to the sky of the dunya (in a manner befitting His majesty), and He forgives His slaves except for the polytheist and the one who harbors enmity for his brother."**

Sources: Narrated by Imam al-Bazzar (d. 287) رحمته الله in his *Musnad* (120), Imam ibn Khuzaimah (d. 310) رحمته الله in *al-Tawheed* (pg. 325 #48), Imam al-Baihaqi رحمته الله in his *Shua'b al-Iman* (3828, 3829), and others.

Imam ibn Khuzaimah رحمته الله included this hadith under the chapter heading, "Reports with authentic chains," indicating that he considered it *Sahih*.

Imam al-Mundhiri (d. 656) رحمته الله declares it authentic (*bi Isnad la ba's bihi*) in *al-Targhib wa al-Tarhib* (4190). This was concurred by the renowned Muhaddith, Sheikh Abdullah Ghumari رحمته الله in his *Husn al-Bayan* pg. 13.

Hafiz ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani (d. 852) رحمته الله says in *al-Amali al-Mutlaqah* (#107), "This hadith is *Hasan* if its via the narration of Qasim from his paternal uncle..." It so happens that Imam al-Baihaqi narrates it from Qasim from his paternal uncle in *Shu'ab al-Iman* 3828.

3. Abu Tha'labah al-Khushani رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, **“When it is the middle night (15th) of Sha’ban, Allah showers His mercy upon his creation, thereby forgiving the believers, and granting respite to the disbelievers. He leaves out those who harbor enmity due to their enmity until they leave it.”**

Sources: Narrated by Imam al-Baihaqi رحمته الله in *al-Sunan al-Sughra* (1426) and in *Shu’ab al-Iman* (3551), and others.

Authenticity: The Hadith was declared *mursal jayyid* (sound) by Imam al-Baihaqi رحمته الله in *Shu’ab al-Iman*.

4. Abdullah ibn ‘Amr رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, **“Allah showers His mercy onto His creation on the middle night of Sha’ban, thereby forgiving His slaves except for two (types of people): those who harbor enmity, and murders.”**

Sources: Narrated by Imam Ahmad رحمته الله in his *Musnad* (6642) and others.

Authenticity: Shaikh Shu’aib al-Arnaut says in his annotations on *Musnad Ahmad* that although this narration is *da’if* on its own, it reaches the level of *sahih* when considering all supporting evidences together. Hafiz Mundhiri declared it slightly *da’if (layyin)* and was concurred by Shaikh Abdullah Ghumari رحمته الله in *Husn al-Bayan* pg. 13.

5. ‘Awf ibn Malik رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, **“Allah showers His mercy upon His creation on the middle night of Sha’ban, thereby forgiving all of them except for the polytheist and the one who harbors enmity.”**

Sources: Narrated by Imam al-Bazzar رحمته الله in his *Musnad* 2754.

Authenticity: Maulana Tahmidul Maula declares the chain of transmission *Hasan* and dedicates a couple of pages going over the status of two narrators in the chain: Abdur Rahman ibn Ziyad ibn An'um, and Abdullah ibn Lahi'ah.

As for Abdur Rahman ibn Ziyad, it is famously stated that he is *da'if*, but this cannot be accepted unconditionally as there are several major Muhaddithin who declared him reliable and/or praised him, including the likes of Imams al-Bukhari (d. 256) ﷺ, Yahya ibn Sa'eed al-Qattan (d. 198) ﷺ, 'Abdullah ibn Wahb (d. 197) ﷺ, Ahmad ibn Salih al-Misri (d. 248) ﷺ, and Suhnun (d. 240) ﷺ. Shaikh Awwamah writes in his annotations on *al-Kashif* (3/274), "The man is famously known for this (i.e. being *da'if* in his memory), but this cannot be taken unconditionally..."

As for Abdullah ibn Lahi'ah, Shaikh Awwamah has a lengthy annotation on him in *al-Kashif* (3/202). The issue is that Abdullah ibn Lahi'ah was reliable if he narrated from his books (as opposed to narrating from memory). Unfortunately, his books burned in approximately the year 169 or 170. After that, he relied on his memory (which wasn't the best). Thus, whoever learned from him before these books burned (i.e. while he narrated from his books instead of his memory), then those narrations are reliable. Whoever narrates from him after his books burned, then those narrations are unreliable. Those who are known to have narrated from him prior to his books burning include the likes of al-Awzai, Shu'bah, al-Thawri, 'Amr ibn al-Harith, as they passed away before the books had burned. Ishaq ibn 'Isa al-Tabba' learned from him five years before his books burned. The four Abdullahs also took from him prior to the books burning, and they are: Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak, Abdullah ibn Wahb, Abdullah ibn Maslamah al-Qa'nabi, and Abdullah ibn Yazid al-Muqri. Others include the likes of Qutaibah ibn Sa'eed, Walid ibn Mazyad al-Bairuti, and Abdur Rahman ibn Mahdi.

The contemporary Muhaddith of Bangladesh, Shaikh Abdul Matin, is inclined to the view that Abdullah ibn Lahi'ah's narrations are *Hasan* so long as there aren't external factors to say otherwise.

The point is that one cannot just look at Abdullah ibn Lahi'ah and automatically assume the Hadith *da'if*. One must look at other factors for supporting strength.

For a more detailed study regarding Abdullah ibn Lahi'ah, one may check Dr. Ahmad Ma'bad al-Karim's annotations on Hafiz ibn Sayyid al-Nas's *al-Nafh al-Shadhi* 2/792.

6. 'Aishah رضي الله عنها narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said after performing salah in the 15th night of Sha'ban, **"This is the middle night of Sha'ban. Indeed, Allah the Might and Exalted, showers His mercy upon his servants on the middle night of Sha'ban, thereby forgiving those who seek His forgiveness, having mercy on those who seek His mercy, and he withholds from those who harbor malice as they are."**

Source: Narrated by Imam al-Baihaqi رحمته الله in *Shu'ab al-Iman* (8535).

Authenticity: Imam al-Baihaqi رحمته الله declared it *mursal jayyid*.

Note: There are other chains of transmission for this incident. They have been discussed in some detail Maulana Tahmidul Maula in his *al-I'tibar bima warada fi Lailah al-Nisf Min Sha'ban* pgs. 56-69.

7. Abu Musa al-Ash'ari رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, **"Indeed, Allah showers His mercy in the middle night of Sha'ban, thereby forgiving his creation except for the polytheist and the one harboring malice."**

Source: Narrated by Imam ibn Majah (d. 273) رحمته الله in his *Sunan* (1390) and others.

Authenticity: Hafiz al-Busiri (d. 840) رحمته الله declares this specific narration *dai'f* in *Misbah al-Zujajah*, however he then brings supporting evidence to support it. This leads Maulana Tahmidul Maula to declare it *Hasan li Ghairihi* (*Hasan* due to supporting evidences) in *al-I'tibar* pg. 69.

General Statements of the Muhaddithin

Thus far we have seen several Muhaddithin who have declared the virtue of this night to be rigorously authenticated from specific Hadith. Hereunder we present general statements from other Muhaddithin who acknowledged its virtuous status.

1. Imam al-Shafi (d. 204) ﷺ said in *Kitab al-Umm* (2/485) that reports had reached him that dua is especially accepted on five nights, and he mentioned the 15th night of Sha'ban as one of them. This demonstrates that the salaf themselves acknowledged the virtue of this night.
2. Hafiz ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728) ﷺ writes in *Iqtida al-Sirat al-Mustaqim* (1/301), "Narrations and reports have been narrated regarding its (15th night of Sha'ban) virtue, which demand that it is a virtuous night. There were those from the salaf (pious predecessors) who would specifically perform salah on this night...that which many of the people of knowledge maintain, or the majority of them from our (Hanbali) companions and other than them: that it is a virtuous night, and this is what is indicated from the statement of Imam Ahmad..."
3. Imam Ibn al-Hajj al-Maliki (d. 737) ﷺ writes in *al-Madkhal* (1/299), "In general, this night – although it is not Lailatul Qadr – is a night of great virtue and abundant good. The salaf – may Allah be pleased with them – used to honor it."
4. Hafiz ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751) ﷺ quotes the great Shafi jurist, Imam Ahmad ibn Suraij (d. 306) ﷺ as having acknowledged the 15th night of Sha'ban as authentically established from the Prophet ﷺ in *Ijtima al-Juyush al-Islamiyyah* pgs. 75-76.
5. Hafiz ibn Rajab al-Hanbali (d. 795) ﷺ says in *Lataif al-Ma'arif* pg. 151, "It is befitting for the believer that he frees himself on this night for the remembrance of Allah, and supplicating to Him for the forgiveness of his own sins, and to cover his faults..."
6. 'Allamah Abdul Hayy al-Lucknawi (d. 1304) ﷺ writes in *al-Athar al-Marfu'ah* (pg. 81), "Thus is it known from the sum total of the words and actions in these Ahadith that it is recommended to do extra worship in it (15th night of Sha'ban)."

7. Imam al-‘Asr Anwar Shah al-Kashmiri (d. 1352) ﷺ is recorded to have said in *al-‘Arf al-Shadhi Fi Sharh Sunan al-Tirmidhi* (1/156), “A number of narrations are authentic in regards to the night of *bara’ah*.”
8. The grand Muhaddith of our era, Shaikh Muhammad Awwamah (may Allah preserve him), says in his annotation of *Musannaf ibn Abi Shaibah* (5/305), “These narrations – and there are many others – although each one of them has some issue (with respect to authenticity), they strengthen each other without a doubt. Rather, the Hadith of Mu’adh was declared *Hasan* by Hafiz al-‘Iraqi...”
9. The late grand Muhaddith of *Mazahir al-‘Ulum* in Saharanpur, Shaikh al-Hadith Yunus Jaunpuri (d. 2017) ﷺ, says in *al-Yawaqit al-Ghaliyah* (2/316), “The reality is that although these Ahadith are from those in which can be critiqued individually, many of them are not severe in terms of *du’f*, such that if they are put together, they develop strength (in authenticity).”

Thus, there is substantial evidence that authentically prove the virtue of this night. May Allah ﷻ allow us to take advantage of it.