

Rasulullah SAW said:

"At night there is such a moment in which a Muslim supplicates Allah Ta'ala for the good of this world or the Hereafter, Allah Ta'ala will grant him his request, and this moment appears every night." (Muslim)

The above Hadith bears the good fortune of acceptance of ones du'as at night. However, mention is not made of the specific moment of acceptance. Some Ulama are of the opinion that this period is not known like that of Lailatul Qadr and the special moment of acceptance on Jumu'a (Friday), while others opine that it is at midnight. (Mazahir)

In another Hadith, Rasulullah SAW said:

"The closest Allah Ta'ala gets to his servant is in the last portion of the night. If you possess the ability to be from among those who remember Allah, then become one of them." (Tirmidhi)

As for "the closeness of Allah" above, this refers to Allah's pleasure and mercy showered upon his servants who sacrifice their sleep and strive in His worship. (Mazahir)

Rasulullah SAW said:

"When one third of the night remains our Rabb, Most High, Most Exalted, descends to the first sky and announces, "Who is there to beseech Me that I may answer his prayer and who is there to seek forgiveness that I may forgive him. Then He spreads out His hands (of kindness and mercy) and proclaims, "Who will grant a loan to the One who is neither a destitute or an oppressor." (Muslim)

Explaining the above narration, Allah Ta'ala is free from bodily form and shape. He is Omnipresent and He is not confined to space. The grand scholars - Hafiz Ibn Hajar RA and Imam Malik RA have stated that "Allah Ta'ala descending to the first sky" signifies His special Mercy through which He accepts du'as and forgives sins. (Lam'aat)

As for the loan mentioned in the Hadith, this refers to bodily and financial devotions offered to Allah Ta'ala with the hope of attaining reward. (Mazahir)

THE CORRECT TIME FOR TAHAJJUD

The time of Tahajjud extends from the time of Isha' Solat until Subuh Sadiq (true dawn). Ahadith related from Aishah RA state that Nabi Muhammad SAW sometimes performed Tahajjud in the early portion of the night and on occasions when half the night had passed. However, towards the latter part of his life he frequently performed it in the last portion of the night. As the night progresses, Allah Ta'ala's Mercy and Blessings increase. Hence, the last portion of the night is most preferred.

DU'A TO ASSIST ONE IN AWAKENING FOR TAHAJJUD

A person remarked to Abdullah ibn Abbas RA: "I always intend awakening in the last portion of the night to perform Solat but sleep overpowers me."

Abdullah ibn Abbas RA replied:

"Before sleeping recite from "QUL LAW KANAL BAHRU MIDADAL..." to the end of Surah Al-Kahf. Allah Ta'ala will waken you at whatever time you intend rising."

NUMBER OF RAKAATS IN TAHAJJUD

The number of rakaats performed by Nabi Muhammad SAW varied according to the prevailing circumstances. Although on certain occasions sufficient time was available, Nabi SAW would perform less rakaats when reciting lengthy Qiraat (i.e. when longer surahs were recited, less rakaats were performed).

Deducing from the various narrations - four to twelve rakaats in units of two or four have been recommended. However if two rakaats

are performed in the prescribed time it will of course still be regarded as Tahajjud.

OCCASIONS WHEN ONE IS UNABLE TO AWAKEN FOR TAHAJJUD

Aishah RA relates:

"If for some reason Rasulullah (SAW) was unable to perform Tahajjud, he would perform twelve rakaats during the day (at the time of Dhuha - before midday)."

To continue the discussion of the above hadith, Saiyidina Umar RA relates that Rasulullah SAW said:

"Whoever was unable to complete his devotions at night should complete it in the morning before noon. It will be regarded as though he had completed it at night." (Muslim)

Nevertheless, one should not overlook it because of the time passing by, otherwise the nafs will become accustomed to omitting it.

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AHADITH ON TAHAJJUD

Abdullah bin Salaam RA relates:

"When Nabi SAW entered Madinah (during the Hijrah), people flocked to him, I also went to scrutinise him. When I saw his face, I observed that it was not the face of an imposter. The very first words I heard him say was, "O Mankind, disseminate Salaam, feed others, strengthen kinship, and establish Solah while the rest of mankind is asleep." (Mishkaat)

It is well known that before embracing Islam, Abdullah bin Salaam RA was a learned Rabbi of the Jews. He studied the description of the Last Nabi enumerated in the scriptures of the Bani Israel. Thus, when he saw Nabi SAW, he immediately recognised him as the Nabi of Allah (SAW).

Also in the above narration, we learn that our beloved Prophet SAW has urged us to practise three deeds; the first of which is to disseminate Salaam i.e. to increasingly make Salaam.

In one Hadith, Rasulullah SAW is reported to have said:

"You will not enter Jannah unless your Imaan is perfected, and your Imaan will not be perfected unless you are compassionate to each other. Should I not direct you to a deed that will create love among you? Be vigilant in disseminating Salaam." (Riwayat Muslim)

After that, the second deed which we have been urged to carry out is feeding others.

The noble companion, Ubaid bin Umair RA relates:

"On the Day of Judgement people will rise in a state of hunger, thirst and total nakedness; however he who fed others for the sake of Allah will be granted food to his fill, and he who gave water to someone for the pleasure of Allah will have his thirst fully quenched, and the one who clothed others will receive a dress from Allah Ta'ala. " (Ihya)

The third act which we have been exhorted to carry out is strengthening kinsmanship. This is among those deeds the fruits of which one will reap in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

Rasulullah SAW is reported to have said:

"Whoever wishes to have his livelihood expanded and his life prolonged should treat his relatives with kindness." (Bukhari & Muslim)

The fourth deed which is mentioned in the above most Hadith is:

"performing Solah while the rest of mankind is asleep."

In the Qur'an, Allah Ta'ala says:

"And the servants of The Most Gracious (Allah) are those... who spend the night in adoration of their Lord, prostrating and standing (in Qiyaam)." (Surah 25: Ayat 64)

In another Hadith, the Prophet Muhammad SAW is reported to have advised:

"Be vigilant in standing up (in prayer) at night for it was the practise of the pious before you. It is a means of gaining proximity to Allah Ta'ala, an expiation for transgressions, and a barrier from sins." (Riwayat Tirmidhi)

In this hadith, Nabi SAW emphasised the importance of Tahajjud, its virtues and spiritual benefits. The term - "the pious before you" - refers to the Ambiyaa AS before Rasulullah SAW and their faithful followers. It is obvious that - "gaining proximity to Allah Ta'ala" - is the objective of man's existence. This is only possible by total servitude to Allah Ta'ala.

In relation to this, Allah Ta'ala, addressing Nabi SAW says in the Qur'an:

"Prostrate and gain closeness to Allah Ta'ala. (Surah 96: Ayat 19)

In a Hadith Qudsi (divine related hadith), Rasulullah SAW informs that Allah Ta'ala says:

"If my servant comes closer to me by one span, I go towards him a cubit's length; if he comes to me a cubit's length, I go towards him an arm's length; and if he walks towards me, I run unto him." (Bukhari & Muslim)

The above Hadith Qudsi implies that if man increases his devotion to Allah, then Allah will increase His Mercy and Kindness proportionately far greater. The terms - "getting closer" and "running" - signify immediate increase in Allah's Blessings and Mercy.

The subject of the above-most Hadith has also been narrated in other Ahadith with slight variations. In one Hadith mentioning the virtues and benefits of Tahajjud, the above three virtues are mentioned together with it being a cure for jealousy. Another hadith, together with the same three virtues mentioned, mention about Tahajjud being a cure for physical ailments.

Another Hadith narrates that Rasulullah SAW said:

"Solah at night guards one from sin, cools the wrath of Allah and is protection from the heat of the Day of Judgement."

In another Hadith, Nabi SAW said:

"There are three groups of people with whom Allah Ta'ala smiles. They are - a person who stands in Solah at night; a community when they stand in the saf (rows for Solah); and a nation when they prepare the arrays on the battlefield." (Sharhus Sunnah)

In the above narration, the term - "Allah Ta'ala smiles" - denotes the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala. Certainly Allah's pleasure is the greatest reward and bliss one can ever attain in this world and the Hereafter.

In the Qur'an, Allah Ta'ala says:

"And the pleasure of Allah is the greatest bliss." (Surah 9: Ayat 72)

It is related in one Hadith, that Rasulullah SAW said:

"Allah Ta'ala will call the people of Jannah (Paradise); they will reply, "Labbaik (we are in your service)". Allah Ta'ala will ask them, "Are you pleased?"; they will reply, "Why should we not be pleased when You have granted us the best of blessings". Allah Ta'ala will then ask them, "Should I grant you a blessing that would surpass all others?" The people of Jannah will entreat, "What can be a greater blessing than those we have already received?". At that time Allah Ta'ala will reply, "I confer My everlasting pleasure upon you, and I will never be displeased with you after this." (Fawaidh Uthmani)

In another Hadith, Nabi SAW is reported to have said:

"When a person, on a cold night, leaves his wife and his bed to perform wudhu (ablution) and Solah (Tahajjud); on seeing this Allah Ta'ala inquires from the Angels, "What has inspired My servant to do this?" They reply, "Our Lord, it is because of Your special Benevolence and the exceptional hope they have (in Your Mercy). To this Allah Ta'ala will say, "I call you to witness that whatever hopes they have in Me, I have fulfilled them; and I have granted them safety from all (their) fears." [b]

TO ENCOURAGE ONE'S HOUSEHOLD TO PERFORM TAHAJJUD

It is narrated in one hadith that Rasulullah SAW said:

"(The Prophet) Dawud (AS) had set aside a time at night in which he would awaken his household. He would say, 'O people of my household, awaken and perform Salaah; for certainly this is the time in which Allah Ta'ala accepts Du'as (supplications) except the Duas of a sorcerer and a bandit.'" (Ahmad & Mishkaat)

Abu Hurairah RA relates that Nabi Muhammad SAW said:

"Allah Ta'ala has mercy on a person who stands up at night to perform Tahajjud and also awaken his wife. If she does not wake up, he sprinkles water on her face. And Allah Ta'ala has mercy on a woman who stands up for Tahajjud and also awakens her husband. If he does not wake up, she sprinkles water on his face." (Abu Dawud and Mishkaat)

It should be noted here that "sprinkling water" could be taken in its literal sense. Also, Muslim scholars have explained that it may also refer to any method of kindness that one may adopt when awakening another (i.e. between husband, wife and family). (Mirqaat)

The hadith also indicates that good conduct is to be adopted between spouses and other associates and secondly one should encourage others to do good.

Allah Ta'ala says:

[b]"And assist each other in piety and self abstinence."

Abu Sa'eed RA and Abu Hurairah RA relate that Nabi Muhammad SAW said:

"When a man awakens his family and they perform Tahajjud, they will be considered among the 'Zakireen' and the 'Zakiraat'." (Abu Dawud & Ibn Majah)

Family here refers to one's spouse, children and close family members. Zakireen and Zakiraat are those men and women who remember Allah Ta'ala in all conditions.

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VERSES OF THE QUR'AN REGARDING TAHAJJUD

Allah SWT says in the Qur'an, while addressing Nabi Muhammad SAW:

"O you wrapped in a cloth, Stand (in prayer) by night except a portion, half of it or a little less, or a little more, and recite the Qur'an in measured tones. Soon shall we send down to you a weighty message. Truly the rising by night is most potent for governing the soul, and most effective in speech (of praises and prayer)." (Surah 73: Ayats 1~6)

In early Islam, prior to the five times daily Solat becoming Fardh (obligatory), Tahajjud was made Fardh on Nabi Muhammad SAW and the Ummah. Nabi SAW and the Sahabah RA were so vigilant in executing this duty that they would remain awake most of the night to perform Tahajjud.

It has been narrated that Nabi SAW's feet would swell, and this is because of excessive standing in Tahajjud.

Allah Ta'ala then revealed the Ayat:

"Now recite as much as is easy of the Qur'an." (Surah 73: Ayat 20)

The above revealed verse of the Qur'an abrogated the compulsion of Tahajjud on the Ummah. Notwithstanding the abrogation, most of the Sahabah RA remained steadfast on it for the rest of their lives.

The following verses illustrate two benefits of Tahajjud:

"Truly the rising by night is most potent for governing the soul..."

The grand scholar among the Sahabah RA - Abdullah bin Abbas RA said:

"At the time of Tahajjud, there appears to be a great affinity between the heart and the ears."

This is a time of peace and tranquillity in which the ears respond quicker and the heart is more alert and receptive to one's devotions. They react spontaneously to whatever is uttered by the tongue. Furthermore, the benefit of keeping the lowly desires in check and restraining it against evil and vice is also found in Tahajjud.

The verse continues:

"...and most effective in speech."

The presence of the heart is conducive to a more meaningful and sincere recitation of the Qur'an and submission. This is what a person may obtain during Tahajjud.

In another ayat of the Qur'an, Allah SWT says:

"As for the Righteous, they will be in the Gardens and fountains [of Jannah], with joy the rewards which their Lord gives them, before this [in the world] they were virtuous. They slept but little at night, and they prayed for forgiveness in the hours of early dawn." [Surah 51: Ayat 15-18]

These ayat above describe the qualities of the sincere believers and their everlasting rewards in the Hereafter. Abdullah bin Abbas RA has stated that this verse conveys glad tidings to all those who spend a portion of the night, however short it may be, in the worship of Allah Ta'ala.

Ahnaf bin Qais RA said:

"I compared our actions to that of the people of Jannah and I discovered that they by far excelled us; our actions do not compare with theirs. They slept less at night and laboured more in their devotions to Allah. I then compared our actions to that of the people of Jahannam and I discovered that they refuted Allah, His Rasul (SAW) and Qiyamah. I realised that our actions are not of the standard of the people of Jannah, and (Alhamdulillah) not like that of the people of Jahannam. I therefore conclude that we are among those about whom Allah Ta'ala says, "Those who mixed a good act with another that was evil."

Abdur Rahman bin Zaid RA relates that once, a person from the Banu Tameem clan remarked to his father:

"O Abu Usamah, we do not find that quality within us about which Allah Ta'ala praised the righteous. i.e. they remain awake most of the night. Our condition is such that we remain awake for a very short time only to render our Ibadah."

His father (RA) replied:

"Glad tidings are for those who sleep when sleep overtakes them, but they fear Allah on awakening."

In another verse, Allah Ta'ala says:

"And spend a portion of the night with the Qur'an, as an additional prayer." (Surah 17: Ayat 79)

The above verse has exhorted us to perform Nawafil Solat (optional prayer) at night. Although it is virtuous to perform the Tahajjud Solat after rising up from one's sleep, one may perform it before retiring to bed.

Tabi'in, Hassan Basri RA said:

"Any Nawafil Solat performed after Isha' is regarded as Tahajjud, although it is normally referred to as a Solat performed after one sleeps a portion of the night."

In another ayat of the Holy Qur'an, Allah Ta'ala says:

"(The believers are those) whose sides remain away from their beds, while they call on their Lord with fear and hope." (Surah 32: Ayat 16)

This ayat expounds the true quality of the sincere servants of Allah Ta'ala. They distance themselves from their beds in the darkness of

night because of fear of attaining Allah's displeasure and His chastisement; while cherishing hope of His mercy and rewards.

The grand Ulama of the Sahabah RA - Mu'adh bin Jabal RA relates:

"Once I was on a journey with Nabi SAW. One morning, at the time of Fajr (dawn), I asked, "O Rasulullah (SAW) - Do show me such an action that will grant me admission into Jannah." Nabi SAW replied, "You have inquired about an extremely difficult affair, nevertheless it becomes easy for those whom Allah makes it easy. Worship Allah without ascribing any partners to Him, establish Solah, observe the fast in the month of Ramadhan, and perform Hajj of the Baitullah. Fasting is a shield, while charity extinguishes the fire of sin and so does a person's Solah in the darkness of the night. Thereafter Nabi SAW recited the above ayat."

Rasulullah SAW said:

"When Allah Ta'ala resurrects the entire mankind on the Day of Qiyamah, an announcer will announce, and his voice will be heard by the entire Creation:

"O you who have been resurrected, on this day you will come to know those who deserve honour and reverence, O you who have been resurrected, stand up, those among you who possess the quality of "their sides remained away from their beds".

A small group of people will stand up. Another narration states, "They will enter Jannah without reckoning. Thereafter the rest of mankind will be called for the reckoning."

Fee Amanillillah