

Ramadan: Itikaaf

Hazrat Aisha narrates that Sayyidina Rasulallah(pbuh) used to practice Itikaaf in the last ten nights of Ramadan and used to say, "Look for the Night of Qadr in the last ten nights of the month of Ramadan".

[Sahih Bukhari - Book 32, Hadith no. 237]

The word 'itikaaf' is derived from the Arabic verb 'itikafa', which means to isolate & devote oneself.

It was the practise of Sayyidina Rasulallah(pbuh) to perform Itikaaf as a way of disassociating himself from worldly affairs and submit himself totally in the remembrance of Allah.

Itikaaf is the act of staying in the Masjid for the last third of Ramadan, devoting your time to worship & please Allah.

Benefits of Itikaaf

- brings you closer to Allah

- less opportunity to sin

- continuous intention to perform good deeds

- spiritual rank increases

- allows time to reflect & improve character

- increases & strengthens faith

Conditions of Itikaaf

- It must be performed in a Masjid which leads congregational prayers (Jamaat)

- Except the Hanafi Madhab, other Madhabs teach that the Masjid must also lead Friday Jummah prayers, so the person in Itikaaf does not have to leave to read Jummah in another Masjid.

- According to the Hanafi ruling, women can perform Itikaaf at home in one room, or a corner of a room reserved for prayer.

Other Madhabs teach that women should perform Itikaaf in the Masjid as the blessed wives of Sayyidina Rasulallah(pbuh) used to do.

- One must be fasting during Itikaaf.

- Women must not be menstruating or experiencing post-natal bleeding.

If menstruation begins during Itikaaf, she must leave until it is over and then, if possible, she may return to Itikaaf.

- It is important to make Niyyat (intention) of Itikaaf before sunset on 19th Ramadan.

- Itikaaf ends on the sunset of the last day of Ramadan, even if the days of Itikaaf only amount to 9.

However according to the Maliki Madhab, one only leaves Itikaaf when it is time for the Eid prayer.

Permissible Reasons to Leave Itikaaf

- to use the toilet, or to perform wudhu or ghusl

- to attend Jummah in a Masjid which leads it, if you are in a Masjid which does not do so (Hanafi ruling).

Other Madhabs require Itikaaf in a Masjid which leads Jummah so this point only applies to Hanafis.

- If there is fear or danger that the Masjid may collapse, one can move to another Masjid to continue his Itikaaf.

- To obtain food if there is no other means to do so.

Acts which Nullify Itikaaf:

- leaving the Masjid (unless for reasons stated above)

- performing sexual acts

- becoming unconscious or insane

- being intoxicated

- being detained for debt

- being involved in major sin & wrongdoing

- menstruating or experiencing Nifas (bleeding after childbirth)

According to the Maliki Madhab, the menstruating woman is still under the condition of Itikaaf until she returns or the period of Itikaaf is over.