

invoking Allah's blessing on the Messenger of Allah, and supplications, as well as any act of worship that will bring the servant nearer to Allah. Included in these acts of worship is studying the books of *Tafseer*, hadith, the life history of the Prophets, as well as any books on *fiqh* and religion. He should build a retreat (store his provisions) in the corner of the masjid where he or she will not disturb the regular worshippers.

He should not concern himself with what does not concern him, which is the best way to seek nearness to Allah. In a hadith reported by Ibn 'Abbas (raa), the Messenger of Allah (saas), was delivering a sermon, *khutbah*, and a man stood up but would not talk. A companion said,

“This is Abu Israel. He vowed to not stand, nor sit, nor seek shade, nor speak, but fast.” The Messenger (saas) said, “Command him to speak and seek shade, to sit and complete his fast.” (Bukhari, Ibn Majah and Abu Dawuud)

In a related report the Messenger of Allah (saas) stated:

“No person can be called orphan after puberty; and no person should remain silent all day and night.” (Abu Dawuud)

What is Permitted of the Retreater

He may leave the retreat and go out to bid farewell to his family. Safiyah (raa) said:

“The Messenger of Allah (saas) was in his retreat, so I came to visit him at night. I spoke to him, and when I was leaving he stood to bid me farewell. When we reached the door to open it and they quietly passed and greeted the Messenger (saas) then the Messenger told them: ‘Slowly, you don’t need to run, she is Safiyah bint Huyayy, (my wife; don’t think I am walking with an-

other sister)’ they said in surprise: ‘Glory be to Allah, O Messenger of Allah!’ (for they were baffled for what he said to them.) The Messenger said ‘The Satan circulates in the human system the same way the blood circulates, so I was afraid that Satan might throw or whisper (ill thoughts) in your heart.’ ” (Bukhari/Muslim)

The Prophet, (saas) left his retreat. Thus it is permissible to leave.

It is permitted to comb one's hair, shave, trim the nails, clean the body, wear one's best clothes and use perfume. In a report by 'Aishah (raa), she said:

“The Messenger used to be in *I’etikaaf* and he would put his head through the window and I would wash it for him, while I was in my menstruation.” (Muslim/Bukhari)

It is permitted for him to leave the masjid to take care of essential things. The scholars agreed that the retreator is permitted to leave to eat and drink and to use the toilet, also to leave the masjid to purify the body from *janabah* and to clean the clothes.

It is permitted to eat and drink and sleep in the masjid, but extreme care should be taken to safeguard the cleanliness of the Masjid. The person may be a party to weddings and some legal contracts taking place in the masjid during the *I’etikaaf*.

Things That Invalidate Al-I’etikaaf

Exiting from the masjid without any good reason, even if it is for a moment, because that is one of its pillars.

Apostasy (*riddah*) for it contradicts *`ebadah*. Allah (SWT), states:

“But it has already been revealed to thee as it was to those before thee,- if thou were to join gods with Allah, truly fruitless will be thy work (in life) and thou will surely be in the ranks of those who lose (all spiritual good)”

(Al-Qur`an,39:65)

Insanity due to madness, drugs or intoxicants, for sanity is prerequisite in all forms of worship.

Menstruation (*hayd*) and post-childbirth bleeding (*nifaas*).

Martial relations. Allah states:

“...But do not associate with wives while you are in retreat in the masaajid.”

(Al-Qur'an, 2: 187)

Nothing is wrong with touching one's spouse provided it is free from passion. This does not include kissing. If one kisses or touches his spouse with passion, he or she has done wrong, for it contradicts the spirit of *I'etikaaf*, but the *I'etikaaf* is valid provided he does not discharge semen. That is according to Imams Abu Hanifah and Ahmed. Imam Malik, on the other hand, said in this instance, the *I'etikaaf* becomes invalid because this is illegal association, even without discharge of semen. The reason for the difference of opinion is the interpretation of the word “*association*” (*mubasharah*).

Originally *baashara* means to touch, scrape off; or to have sexual intercourse. The point here is an *usuulul Fiqh*, Islamic legal theory, question. That is, does the word that implies both

actual and metaphorical have a general implication, *aam*, or not? Those who say it has a general implication, *aam*, say *mubasharah* in the above verse means actual marital intercourse and any association that is less than intercourse. Those who say it does not have a general implication say *mubasharah* here means only sexual relations. *Allahu 'Alam*.

Redemption of I'tikaaf

Whoever starts *I'tikaaf* voluntarily and then breaks it is recommended to redeem it. But if he vows a day, or two, then starts and then invalidates it, he must redeem it whenever he is able, according to the majority of the scholars. If he died before making it up redemption is not necessary, however, Imam Ahmed said: "His next of kin should redeem it for him."

The Lesser Hajj ('Umrah)

Among the virtuous acts recommended during Ramadan, is performance of 'Umrah, the lesser Hajj, for those Muslims who are capable physically and financially first to travel to the House of Allah (*Ka'abah*) in Makkah, and who can afford the expenses of air fare or bus fare and accommodations.

The case for this 'Umrah rests on the Hadith in which the Messenger of Allah (says) said:

“Performing 'Umrah in the month of Ramadan equals performing Hajj” (Agreed Upon)

This hadith indicates the merits of 'Umrah in Ramadan. It does not specify whether 'Umrah is performed in the beginning of the month or in the last ten days of Ramadan.

There is a popular belief that this 'Umrah should be on the 27th of Ramadan, the Night of Power. This results in a traffic jam on that date in the grand Masjid, with thousands of visitors around the world wanting to make 'Umrah on that night. As I have explained in the section on the Night of Power, the recommended act on the Night of Power is not 'Umrah, it is *Tahajjud* (nightly prayer). After all, no one is certain that the 27th is the Night of Power.

Indeed, for those who can afford it and may have made Hajj, 'Umrah in Makkah during Ramadan is a lifetime experience that no one should miss. Words cannot describe the exhilarating feeling of Iftar (fast breaking, nightly prayer, and Taraweeh) in the Holy Land with other pilgrims.

Epilogue

Praise be to Allah (SWT) for the blessings of faith, and may His peace and blessing be upon the seal of the Prophets, Muhammad Bin Abdullah, his family and companions until the end of time. The believer should be cognizant of the fact that the month of Ramadan is nearing its end and its departure is imminent. Ramadan may be a witness for or against you. Whoever is blessed to fill it with faith and good deeds should thank Allah for the honor, and must be assured of reward in the Hereafter. For Allah (SWT) will never deny a soul his or her just and complete reward. Whoever fills it with unseemly acts should return to Allah in repentance, which He has promised to accept.

Allah (SWT) has mandated acts of worship at the end of Ramadan in order to assist us in our desire to express our love for Allah, to strengthen our faith and increase the weight of our deeds. He mandated fast breaking alms (*Zakatul Fitr*); legislated glorification and exaltation of Allah, (Takbeer) on the eve of 'Eid beginning from sunset until the time of 'Eid. He (SWT) stated:

“He wants you to complete the prescribed period and to glorify Him in that He has guided you and perchance you shall be grateful”

(Al-Qur'an, 2: 187)

The takbeer goes like this:

“Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, laa ilaaha illallah, wallahu Akbar Allahu Akbar wa lillahil hamd.”

Men will say this *Takbeer* aloud in Masaajid, market places, and in homes affirming Allah's glory and publicizing His mercy upon them. Women will express their *Takbeer* silently

as they are commanded to conceal their voices. Allah (SWT) legislated `Eid prayer. It culminates in the remembrance of Allah (SWT). The Messenger of Allah (saas) commanded his followers, men and women, to fulfil this *`Ebadah* and His commands must be obeyed by all, as Allah (SWT) said:

“O ye who believe, obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and make not vain your deeds.”

(Al Qur'an, 47: 33)

He commanded women to leave their homes and attend *`Eid*, whereas their praying at home is at other times more preferable and better.

In a Hadith related by Umm `Atiyah, she said,

“The Messenger of Allah commanded us to leave our homes for *`Eidul Fitr* and *`Eidul-Adha* prayers, including mature, menstruating women and virgins. As for the menstruating women, they should keep away from the place of worship but should participate in good deeds and du`a. `Umm `Atiyah interrupted: ‘O Messenger of Allah, some of us do not have the outer garment (*Jalbab*)!’ He replied: ‘She may borrow it from her friend.’”
(Muslim and Bukhari)

It is recommended to eat a few dates in odd numbers before leaving for `Eid in *`Eidul Fitr*, in accordance with the report from Anas Bin Malik (raa), who said:

“The Messenger of Allah (saas) will not leave for *`Eidul Fitr* until he eats some dates in odd numbers.” (Ahmed / Bukhari)

It is recommended to go to the `Eid site walking instead of riding unless the place is far or the person is unable to walk due to age or illness. Men should wear their best clothes, but should avoid silk and gold. Women should wear modest and decent long dresses, and avoid flashy or immodest outfits and per-

fumes in their outing for `Eid. `Eid prayer should be observed in the most humble and devoted manner.

One should praise Allah often and seek His mercy and should remember the ultimate gathering in the Hereafter (Al Maqamul a'Azam). He should be cognizant of the fact that there is inequality and disparity among the ranks of the believers on `Eid day as there will be disparity in ranks among the believers in the Hereafter. Allah (SWT) stated:

“See how We have bestowed more on some than on others, but verily the Hereafter is more in rank and gradation and more in excellence.”

(Al-Qur'an, 17:21)

One should be jubilant that he or she is blessed to fast during Ramadan and has been able to observe prayers, recitation of Al-Qur`an and giving of Zakaat. These acts are better for us than this world. Allah (SWT) says:

“Say in the bounty of Allah and in His mercy, in that let them rejoice; that is better than the wealth they hoard.”

(Al-Qur'an, 10: 58)

Indeed, if the `Ebadah of this Ramadan is finished and the `Eid prayer is completed the `Ebadah of the believer will not finish until death. Allah (SWT) states:

“O ye who believe, fear Allah as He should be feared, and die not except in a sate of Islam”

(Al-Qur'an, 3:102)

Also,

“And serve thy Lord until there comes unto thee the Hour that is certain.”

(Al-Qur'an, 15: 99).

The Messenger of Allah said:

“When the servant of Allah dies, his deeds are cut off.”

So the service to Allah is continuous until the end of life. The end of Ramadan does not mean the end of fasting. There is the highly recommended fasting of six days in Shawwal, and three days sunnah fasting in every month, as well as on Mondays and Thursdays, and fasting most of Shaban and Muharram. If Ramadan is over, night prayers are not. Praise be to Allah, this remains a sunnah of the Messenger (saas) every night of the year forever. In a Hadith by Mughirah bin Shu'bah (raa) he said:

“The Messenger of Allah (saas) regularly prayed at night until his feet swelled'. He was asked, ‘Why (this hardship)?’ He responded: ‘Why shouldn't I be a servant who expresses his gratitude this way.’” (Bukhari)

In another Hadith related by Abdullah bin Salaam (raa), the Messenger said:

“O people if you disseminate salutations (salaam) among your ranks, feed those who need to be fed and maintain the family ties and pray at night while people sleep, you will enter paradise with peace.” (Tirmidhi)

The Sunnah prayers (*Rawatib*) before or after the five daily prayers are 12 raka'at: four before *Zuhr* (Noon prayer), and two after; two raka'at after *Maghrib* (Evening prayer); two raka'at after *Ishah* (Night prayer), and two raka'at before *Fajr* (Morning prayer). In a Hadith related by Umm Habeebah (raa), she say:

“I heard the Messenger of Allah (saas) said: ‘Every servant who observes twelve raka'at of supererogatory prayers other than the obligatory prayers, Allah (SWT) will build for him a house in paradise.’ ”

In another version:

“Whoever prayed twelve raka'at (of supererogatory prayers), day and night, Allah (SWT) will build with them a house for him in paradise.” (Muslim)

Remember the remembrance of Allah after Salaat. Allah (SWT) sates:

“When ye pass (congregational) prayer celebrate Allah's praises standing, sitting down, or lying down on your side...”

(Al-Qur'an, 4: 103)

The Messenger sought forgiveness three times after salutations (salaam) following Salaat. He prayed:

“Allahumma antas Salaam wa minkas salaam tabarakta yaa dhaljalaal wal ikraam.”

He (saas) is reported as saying:

“Whoever glorifies Allah at the end of every Salaat 33 times (*subhanallah*), and praises Allah 33 times (*Al-hamdulillah*), and utters the word of Greatness 33 times, (*Allahu Akbar*) that is ninety nine, then completes it with one hundred, saying:

‘Laa ilaha illallah wahdahu laa sharika lahuu lahul Mulk wa lahul hamd wa huwa `alaa k ulli shay in qadeer,’

his shortcomings will be forgiven, even if it is as large as the froth of the sea.” (Muslim)

Dear believer, strive in the path of Allah and obey His Messenger's commands. Avoid disregarding His commands so that you will deserve a good life in this life and the life after. Allah (SWT) stated:

“Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily to him will We give a new life, a life that is good and pure, and We will be-